Street Youth Task Force

Barriers to Shelter Study Pilot Project Needs Assessment

Final Recommendations Report

*March 31, 2002*King County, Washington

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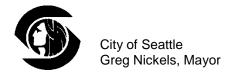
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http://www.cityofseattle.net/humanservices/homeless.htm#youth

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each night hundreds of children, adolescents and young adults in King County go without a safe stable place to sleep. Their homelessness places them at high risk of becoming seriously injured or chronically ill, involved in criminal activity and incarcerated, victims of crime, and dependent on welfare systems. In response to this situation, a complex and multifaceted system of care for homeless youth in Seattle/King County has been developed over past decades to provide youth with safety and support for leaving the streets permanently. In recent years, several apparently intransigent issues have emerged within this system. These issues, along with changes in the youth population have resulted in concern among funders, policy makers and service providers about the efficiency and effectiveness of youth shelter programs in particular.

At present services for homeless youth are in serious jeopardy. Resources for social services are on the decline overall, and services for this often misunderstood population are especially at risk. The Street Youth Task Force, made up of homeless youth service providers, policy makers, and funders, initiated this effort to clarify the issues surrounding youth shelter utilization and identify strategic points of intervention to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services to homeless youth in King County.

The project included a comprehensive investigation of barriers to shelter and housing that exist in our system of services and development of potential solutions. This was accomplished through several processes:

- A review of local service data describes the population of youth using services. This review found that in 2001 many programs served a slightly older population than in previous years.
- A review of research literature describes the most current knowledge on the causes and effects of youth homelessness, shelter utilization patterns and issues, and developmental issues related to youth homelessness and service effectiveness.
- A summary of local reports on related issues describes information compiled locally on youth homelessness, shelter utilization, and recommendations for service system enhancement.
- Youth Focus Groups conducted in summer 2001 provided information on shelters from the perspective of youth.
- Youth Interviews conducted in fall of 2001 provided a wealth of information about youth who are not using shelters regularly and their needs around shelter utilization. A smaller than expected percentage of the youth participating in these interviews was under 18.
- **Service Provider Interviews** clarified a number of utilization issues, especially around the way in which capacity and utilization are generally determined and reported. These interviews also provided information on provider perspectives on how to improve shelter utilization.

 Analysis of the local continuum of care, contrasting it with services in other places, made clear the advantages and disadvantages in the way in which the Seattle/King County system of services for homeless youth is organized and suggested some ways to improve it.

A complete summary of data and information gathered within each of these components is provided in the report. Analyses of these data were done with the goal in mind of identifying strategies most likely to succeed in improving the efficacy of the shelter system to keep youth safe and help them leave the street. Full implementation of these strategies will move the Task Force toward its goal: *All youth will have safe options for shelter and support for leaving the street by the year 2005.*

Findings

The report contains a wealth of information on homeless youth, their needs and the local service system. Several issues clearly stand out as both central to making real improvements to the system and appropriate undertakings for a group such as the Street Youth Task Force.

- Lack of understanding or standards for measuring and reporting of real capacity and functional utilization in shelters
- Complex referral and intake procedures
- Service fragmentation and lack of continuous incentives for engagement throughout the continuum
- Lack of accessible services to rural and suburban areas, and to communities
 of color.
- The existence of disincentives for engagement and unhealthy alternatives to services

Recommendations

Each section of the report addressed one or more aspects of the shelter utilization issue. The following recommendations, based on all these sources of information, are actions that the Task Force can undertake with confidence that they are based on the best knowledge available and are most likely to meet Task Force goals. A preliminary feasibility analysis was performed to identify strategies most likely to be accomplished by the Task Force within the next three years.

Summary and Timeline

Near Term Objectives		
Objective:	Activities/Methods	Projected Completion
Clarify current shelter utilization patterns	Develop and disseminate written materials among providers, funders, elected officials, public.	August 2002
Develop optimal shelter utilization standards	Reach agreement among providers and funders	September 2002
Track youth shelter utilization	Develop system for tracking youth shelter utilization with quarterly reports	October 2002

Mid Term Objectives:

Objective:	Activities/Methods	Projected Completion
Engage stakeholders in plan for improved system integration	Task Force develops community wide planning process	October 2002
Eliminate immediate disincentive to shelter usage: runaway reporting	Seek changes to runaway reporting laws	March 2003
Begin implementation of system integration reforms	Programs begin to implement changes as identified through planning process	July 2003
Implement enhanced information and referral system	Safe Harbors	December 2003

Long Term Objectives:

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Objective:	Activities/Methods	Projected Completion
Increase support to underserved populations: rural suburban youth, youth of color	Develop Training and TA for enhanced support outside homeless youth system	2004
Implement ongoing system reform oversight	Methods to be determined during system integration planning	June 2003

Conclusion

The subcommittee recommendations have the potential to increase the efficacy of youth shelters and improve the entire homeless youth system. These recommendations are based on key findings from the study that identified factors that may impede efficient and effective services intended to protect vulnerable youth and assist homeless youth to achieve their potential as independent adults.

These barriers persist in spite of many years of work by a number of people to improve the service system. Solutions are not simple. A careful strategic planning process along with a high level of commitment on the part of all Task Force members to implementation of these recommendations is needed to finally succeed in creating a more integrated system of services. This is necessary before new services can be developed in a way that ensures fulfillment of the Task Force goal that all youth will have safe options for shelter and support for leaving the street.

Introduction

On any given night in King County, as many as 1,900 young people ages 12-24 are without a safe place to sleep. These children, adolescents and young adults are on the streets and are at high risk of becoming seriously injured or chronically ill, involved in criminal activity and incarcerated, victims of crime, and dependent on welfare systems. The system of services for homeless youth is currently in jeopardy. Resources for social services are on the decline overall at present, and services for this often misunderstood population are especially at risk.

A variety of myths about homeless youth abound: that they are responsible for their circumstances; are unwilling to cooperate with services; and that most are runaways who have homes they can return to. In fact the vast majority of homeless youth are victims of abuse, neglect and other circumstances which they have no control over; most want help to get off the street; and less than 10% are runaways.

Confusion and misperceptions about services for youth are also common. Like homelessness in general, youth homelessness is a complex problem. Services for youth are especially expensive and difficult to provide because of the staff intensity needed to protect vulnerable youth and manage intense adolescent behaviors. The homeless youth population is diverse in demographics, circumstances and needs. Their needs often cross multiple public and private services systems. Assisting youth in navigating these systems without a parent, and defining which system is responsible for providing resources for youth individually or collectively is a challenge.

For these reasons, developing and maintaining resources to help homeless youth is problematic. Funders, policy makers and the public are generally skeptical about the value of investing in homeless youth services or discouraged about the prospect of making a significant impact on the problem. The fact is that services are working well to protect youth from harm and support them in becoming responsible adults. Reductions in services will invariably put many young people at risk of great harm and will likely cost social service and justice system resources more in the long run.

The Street Youth Task Force, made up of homeless youth service providers, policy makers, and funders has initiated an effort to overcome these disadvantages in serving homeless youth, and to address systemic issues in the continuum of care. Due to the many variables involved with homelessness it is critical that this service system be subject to on-going monitoring and revision in order to meet the changing needs of homeless youth. In recent years, several intransigent issues have emerged within the system that impede optimal shelter utilization and pose other difficulties in serving homeless youth. This situation has contributed to public perceptions that youth shelter is an inefficient use of resources. The Street Youth Task Force initiated this needs assessment project to develop strategies for an effective response to these issues.

The project included a comprehensive investigation of barriers to shelter and housing that exist in our system of services and potential solutions. Data collection was accomplished through multiple methodologies:

- Review of local service data
- Review of research literature
- Review of local reports on related issues
- Youth Focus Groups
- Youth Interviews
- Service Provider Interviews
- Analysis of the local continuum of care, contrasting it with services in other places

Summaries of each of these components are provided in the report. Analyses of the data and information were done to determine the strategies most likely to succeed in improving efficiency and effectiveness of the system in keeping youth safe and helping them leave the street. These strategies are discussed in the Findings and Recommendations section.

The Steering Committee suggests that the Task Force set priorities among the recommended actions and develop a strategic plan for their implementation over the next two to three years. This is achievable if all members are committed to meeting the original Task Force goal that all youth will have safe options for shelter and support for leaving the street by the year 2005.

Background

The Street Youth Task Force

The Street Youth Task Force began in 1999 as a group of state and local elected officials and executives of three major private non-profit homeless youth service providers. Since then the Task Force has expanded to include representatives of all major government funders of services to homeless youth and United Way of King County. The group is committed to solving major challenges facing our system of care for homeless youth.

In 1999 the Street Youth Task Force came together with the goal of ensuring safe options for shelter and support for all King County's youth by 2005. At that time King County enjoyed unprecedented economic prosperity and considerable growth in philanthropic giving. Hope for infusion of new resources to address intractable gaps in services was high, and the Task Force sponsored a Charette to design ideal services to fill gaps in the system for homeless youth.

The current national economic downturn began locally with the failure of many of the technology ventures that had created much of the wealth behind the new philanthropy movement in the region. New resources for homeless youth services the Task Force had hoped for failed to materialize. Even so, some of the key gaps identified during the Charette have been addressed. The largest and most costly services, which are crucial to creating real opportunities for youth who face the greatest barriers to services and to success, remain nonexistent or nearly so. Although hope for new resources to address these issues before 2005 is dim, there is much the Task Force can do to improve current services and position the system to take advantage of new resources when better economic times return.

The charge of the Task Force in 2002 is to find ways to improve existing services, reduce regulatory barriers, and ensure that existing services operate in the most efficient and effective way possible. The foundation of this work has been a careful analysis of the system of shelter services and development of a clear understanding of realistic capacity in shelters. These services are viewed by many as inefficient because of their high cost combined with perceived underutilization. This view poses a significant barrier to development of resources for new services even if opportunities for funding were plentiful. We directly address these perspectives in this report.

The Status of Homeless Youth in King County

On any given night in Seattle, an estimated 800 young people ages 12-24 are without a safe place to sleep. For all of King County, the number of homeless youth nightly may be as high as 2,000. Hundreds of our children, adolescents and young adults are on the streets, at high risk of becoming seriously injured, chronically ill, involved in criminal activity and/or incarcerated, sexually exploited and ultimately dependent on welfare systems.

Youth who become homeless come from all socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. In King County they are mostly ages 15 to 21. More than half who use existing county-wide services are white. However, experts believe that there are many homeless youth of color who remain uncounted because they do not have access to culturally appropriate programs. Homeless youth are male and female, some are parents, and most come from homes within the county. Many are affected by childhood trauma, substance abuse, and the stress of street life, all of which can delay healthy adolescent development. State, county, city and community-based programs provide services addressing different aspects of this problem, but critical gaps continue to exist between service capacity and the needs of homeless youth.

The greatest economic and social costs in not addressing the homeless youth population are long-term. Once youth begin to see homelessness as a way of life, they virtually drop out of society. The hope of getting an education is lost. The potential increases for incarceration, emergency hospital and long-term care, and welfare assistance. Early intervention approaches are clearly an investment worth the cost. Several studies have indicated a pattern of increased difficulty in leaving the street/marginal lifestyle with increasing age and time on the street.

Homelessness among youth creates a variety of challenges. Many youth on the streets have experienced great trauma in their lives. Our experience suggests that young people who have watched their lives and dreams crumble can chart a course toward healthy and productive lives with the right combination of services and support.

Definition of a Homeless Youth

The Street Youth Task Force defines a homeless youth as a young person between the ages of 12 and 24 who is without a safe, stable place to sleep and who is not living as part of a family with a responsible parent figure. For this study we have placed a special emphasis on those youth who are under age 18 because there appears to be excess shelter capacity for them.

Problem Statement

This report is focused on the issue that a number of beds designed for homeless youth go unused each night while many youth sleep outdoors or in other hazardous circumstances. King County has approximately 286 shelter and transitional housing beds available for homeless youth, young adults and young mothers with babies. Many of these beds go unused each night. A variety of causes have been cited, including the complex eligibility requirements and procedures for access to programs, and a mismatch between models of service and needs of youth as well as other issues. A number of sources in the research literature document the fact that many homeless youth across the nation never come in contact with shelters and that many shelters operate far below capacity when averaged over the year. However, no

concrete information exists on the specific barriers to shelter for the specific youth who make up the unsheltered population.

Recommendations have been made to improve the utilization of existing beds, but too little information is available to determine what actions are most likely to result in empty beds being filled by youth who are currently unsheltered. This project will identify specific actions that are most likely to have a direct effect in maximizing existing resources to provide access to services for youth.

Service Data Statistics

The best information we have on the numbers, demographics and needs of homeless youth come from data collected during service delivery. Housing, Shelter, Case Management, most support services and some outreach services collect at least some basic information about who they are serving. Some of this information is helpful in providing services, but most is for the purposes of reporting to funders or potential funders about who is being served. Much of the data collected is maintained by individual programs and used only for internal reports and those required for payment by funders. It is quite difficult to compile these data from multiple data collection systems all of which use different categories and collection methods. A majority of data reported here comes from three system level sources:

- 1. The King County Youth Shelter system collects individual intake and exit forms from all clients served in licensed youth shelters in King County.
- 2. The PRO-Youth county-wide outreach/case management program collects a brief enrollment and follow-up form for all clients served by case managers who are part of the program.
- 3. Every year a one night count is made of all shelter and housing for the homeless programs in King County.

The City of Seattle Human Services Department compiles One Night Count data for the King County Coalition for the Homeless. These three sources each provide a picture of a different slice of the homeless youth population. PRO-Youth serves only youth who are documented homeless and interested in finding permanent housing. There must be some likelihood that this can be achievable within 2 years. All programs included in the King County Shelter database except one serve only youth who are under age 18. Unlicensed shelters, which serve many of the more street involved youth, are not included in the database. The One Night Count includes data on all youth who are staying in a shelter or transitional housing program on a single night. None of these sources include youth who are not engaged with shelter, housing or the 10 PRO-Youth case managers. For this report, we conducted interviews with 105 homeless youth who are probably not included in any of the other sources. The data on these youth are included in a later section of this report.

The Basis for Estimates of the Number of Homeless Youth

Estimates of the number of homeless youth range from 500 to 1000 in Seattle and up to 2000 or more in King County. The number of youth who are homeless on any given night varies considerably from one point in time to another. It is difficult to be certain of the exact extent of duplication between data sources and impossible to count youth who are not enrolled in any homeless youth related services. The basis for these extimates is explained below.

Point In Time Data:	Seattle	Countywide
Number of youth receiving service in shelters, transitional housing programs and case management programs at any one time corrected for estimated 19% duplication	811	1,113
Estimate of known undercounted groups – youth of color, youth from immigrant families, couch surfers, youth not willing to comply with service requirements, youth in hiding. Few services are available in areas of the County outside Seattle. Where services have been made available, large numbers of youth have been found, i.e., 295 youth in service with 2 caseworkers in Redmond/Bellevue and 2 in Federal Way/Tukwilla.	200	800
Total served plus additional estimates	1,011	1,913

Table 1

Annual Service Data:

- 2273 runaway reports were made to the Seattle Police in 2001
- 456 youth under 18 were served in King County shelters in 2001
- 468 youth were enrolled in case management services by PRO-Youth in 2001

PRO-Youth Trend Data

In 1998 PRO-Youth was directed to focus on youth likely to transition into housing within 2 years. This directed case managers to emphasize services to youth over 16, which is reflected in the service data shown in the chart below

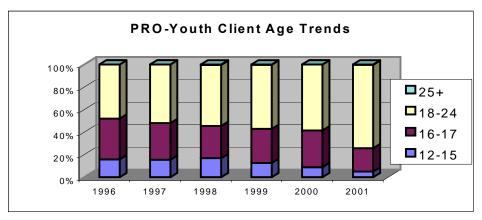
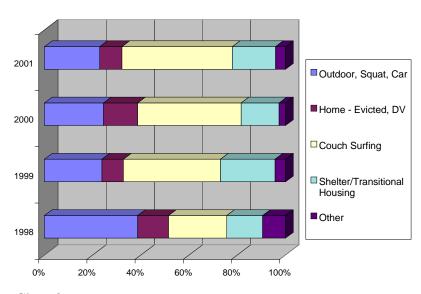


Chart 1

Couch Surfing is defined as an unstable situation in which youth are finding a place to sleep each night on a night-by night basis. Youth who have stable situations in which they can stay with friends for a longer period of time (with parents or an appropriate adult involved if the youth is young) are not eligible for services.



PRO-Youth Enrollment Living Situation Trends



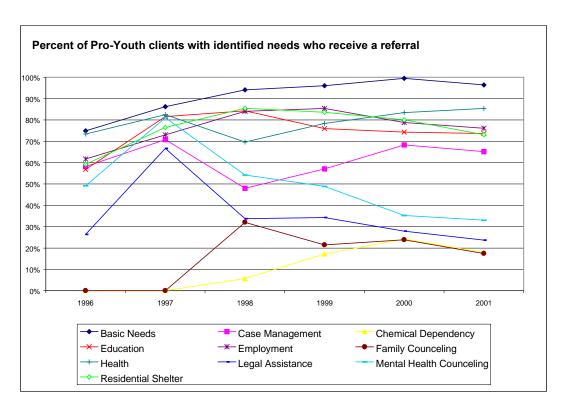


Chart 3

DSHS Involvement of youth using shelters

Data reported are from youth entering shelters in King County during 1999 and first half of 2000. All licensed shelters for youth are included. Status of youth:

34% of all youth entering shelters are state dependents 18% of runaways and 8% of homeless youth entering shelters are state dependents

DSHS reported 52 youth on the run from placement in Region 4 (King County) on February 4, 2002. More homeless youth in Seattle may be on the run from foster care however, because some come here from other regions.

Comparison of Statistics from Three Data Sources

- The King County Shelter Database includes data on youth served in all licensed youth shelters in King County. These programs include some beds that are state placements and some transitional housing beds. Data reported here are from 2001 shelter intakes.
- The PRO-Youth Database includes data on youth served by case managers who are part of outreach and drop-in programs. Data reported here are from 2001 intakes.
- The One Night Count data are compiled from a survey of clients using all shelters and transitional housing programs, including both licensed and unlicensed youth shelters, on one night in October 2001. Only the data from programs serving youth and young adults exclusively are included here.

A comparison of the demographic data from these three sources is displayed in Table 2. PRO Youth has always served older youth than other programs. However in the past year, the proportion of older youth served increased substantially. This is consistent with youth survey results and with provider comments that the age of the youth being served is increasing.

The percentage of youth with identified needs who receive referrals by PRO Youth for basic needs, healthcare, case management and chemical dependency services has increased over the past three years. Referrals for mental health counseling and legal assistance have declined. No explanation for these changes is available, but they may suggest further investigation.

Shelter data tells us that a small percentage of youth who are homeless when entering shelters and a larger percent of runaways are involved with DSHS. In fact 53% of runaways entering the shelters lived in state placements during the majority of the year before they entered.

Comparison of Statistics from Three Data Sources

Gender	Male	Female	Total number of youth
Shelter	57%	43%	477
PRO-Youth	49%	51%	468
One Night Count	48%	52%	229

Age	Ages 12-18	Ages 18-25	Total number of youth
Shelter	92%	8%	477
PRO-Youth	29%	71%	468
One Night Count*	35%	65%	187
*Heads of Household			

Race	White	Youth of Color	Total number of youth
Shelter**	48%	33%	477
PRO-Youth*	53%	55%	468
One Night Count**	45%	42%	229
*Youth could indicate more than one race **Remaining percentages are other or unknown			

Living situation	Street/Shelter	Other	Total number of youth
Shelter	10%	90%	477
PRO-Youth	40%	60%	468
One Night Count	Not Collected	Not Collected	

Mental Health and Drug/Alcohol Needs	MH needs	D/A Needs	Total number of youth
Shelter	73%	33%	477
PRO-Youth	68%	65%	468
One Night Count	16%	22%	229

Table 2

The table of three data sources tells us that some programs serve younger youth and some serve older youth. Shelters are serving a lower percentage of youth of color than PRO-Youth or the entire youth shelter/housing system, each of which serves fairly equal numbers of youth of color and white youth. Living situation cannot be compared between the two systems collecting these data because shelters ask for the most frequent living situation over the past year and PRO-Youth asks for the current living situation. It is clear that a large part of the homeless youth population that is accessing services is not living on the street long term. Many are couch surfing and while not contained in the service data, anecdotal evidence and the youth survey demonstrate that many are exchanging sex or drug dealing for a place to stay.

We must keep in mind that these data sources do not reflect youth who do not or cannot use shelters or housing related case managers. The Youth Interviews section provides some information on that population.

These different types of service data help describe the population from several perspectives. The primary question raised by the data is whether the number of homeless youth in the younger age group has really dropped and if so, why. Is this an anomaly or part of a consistent trend? We may not know for several years. In the mean time some modifications to the age group targeted by programs may be warranted.

Status of the Service System

Gaps Analysis and Service Charette Recommendations

This section explains the status of the services system as it exists and recommendations for filling gaps to meet priority service needs. This information was prepared for the Task Force two years ago through an exhaustive process that is fully documented in the full Service Gaps Analysis report and the Homeless Youth Charette Report. These reports are available upon request through the Seattle Human Services Department. Changes in the status of the system since that time have had minimal impact on the overall capacity of the system. The Charette Recommendations summary that follows indicates where progress has been made.

Service Gaps

Table 3 represents a summary of the February 2000 gaps analysis.

Homeless Youth in Seattle/King County: Service Gaps Analysis

Homeless Youth in Seattle/King County: Service Gaps Analysis			
Service Type	Est. Need	Current Capacity	Additional Needed
Basic Needs			
Daytime Drop-in Centers	1000 youth	Est. 150 youth visit Centers each day, 550 enrolled in service (active cases) at any one time.	More services need to be available at existing centers. More needed outside Seattle.
Street Outreach	1,700 youth	Est. 900 individual youth have contact w/outreach over one month.	800 youth, more outreach to schools and youth centers, esp. those serving youth of color.
Health Care	2,000 youth	Homeless Youth Clinics: 4-5 nights per week; different sites; street services through Safe Links.	Youth Clinics needed throughout county.
Food/Hot Meals	500 youth	Est. 120 individual youth per day.	380 additional youth 500 on weekends.
Hygiene	140 youth per day	(Est. 20/day)	120 per day
Detox/Sleep Off	200 youth per year	Detox beds (3-5) available throughout county.	10 Additional beds for homeless youth
Shelter and Housin	g Services		
Shelter/Emergency placements	235 beds	80 beds	155 beds
Transitional Housing	2000 beds	819 beds	1181 beds
Housing for Young Parents	325 units	102 units	223 + Units
Services to Suppor	t Transition to Sta	ble Independent Living	
Case Management	1,500 youth	24 case managers, 600 youth per year.	45 case managers serve 900 youth per year/reduce case loads slightly.
Outpatient Mental Health Services	800 youth 400 dual diagnoses)	3 or 4 part-time mental health specialists working with homeless youth CBOs. 80 youth per year.	25 new workers (720 youth)
Inpatient Mental Health Treatment	200 youth per year	Est. 25 homeless youth per year get more than 72 hr assessment.	175 youth
Outpatient Drug/Alcohol Services	800 youth/year (400 dual diag.)	2 or 3 part-time Drug/Alcohol specialists working with HY CBOs.100 youth per year.	24 new workers some also mental health. 700 youth.
Inpatient Drug/Alcohol Treatment	200 homeless youth	Est. 10 homeless youth receive inpatient treatment.	190 homeless youth
Educational Services	300 youth	Est. total, 150 youth.	Specialized school programs for 150 youth.
Regular High School/Community Colleges	1,000 youth	Est. 1,000 homeless youth at least somewhat connected with regular schools.	Improved services for 1,000 youth.
Employability Training/Assistance	500 youth	One program serves 100 youth/year. Other employment programs serve some homeless.	400 additional homeless youth.
Independent Living	240 youth	One program serving 25 youth. Most housing or case management programs for homeless youth provide life skills training.	215 youth.

Table 3

Charette Recommendations for Additional Services

The following recommendations for additional services to fill gaps in the system were developed at the Homeless Youth Charette, convened on May 22 and 24, 2000. Progress since that time is indicated in italics in the left column.

Charette Recommendations for Additional Services

EMERGENT NEEDS AND MAINTENANCE OF CURRENT CAPACITY				
Housing Conversion	Conversion of one existing long-term housing program into a 90-day transitional shelter program.	\$120,000/per year		
Overnight Shelter Expansion Some progress made	Increase nights that overnight shelter is available to young adults in the University District and increase services to youth using overnight shelter.	\$90,000		
PRO-Youth Match Funding Secured	Funding to meet McKinney grant match requirements of the PRO-Youth outreach/case management and Working Zone training program, and maintain services throughout the county.	\$210,000 per year		
Psychiatric Medications Fund	Increase Psychiatric medications fund.	\$50,000		
PRO-Youth Training & Network Expansion	Staff training and networking among outreach Youth workers and outreach professionals.	\$80,000		
Outreach Supplies	Supplies for Outreach workers and printing of a resource guide.	\$20,000		
EMEI	EMERGENCY SHELTER/TRANISITONAL HOUSING			
On Site MH/CD Staff	Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Counselors for Transitional Housing programs.	\$600,000 per year		
Showers for Shelters	Showers in University Shelters	\$100,000 per site		
Overnight Shelter in South/East Co. (>18) East County pilot under development	Develop 10-bed overnight shelter program for youth under 18 in East or South King County. Include case management services on site.	\$1.2 million capital \$450,00 per year operating.		
Transitional Shelter in South or East County	Develop one 6-to10 bed transitional shelter (90 days) for young adults in East or South King county.	\$2.5 million Capital, \$450,000 annual operating.		
New Transitional Housing	Develop 20 beds of transitional housing for young adults in Central King. Develop new transitional housing program for 6 teenage parents 16 and 17 years old.	Est. average \$2.5 million Capital, \$450,000 annual operating. For each site		
OUTREACH/ENGAGEMENT				
Public Awareness Campaign	Public Awareness Campaign to inform the community about realities of the lives of homeless youth, reasons for youth homelessness and benefits of addressing the issue.	In-kind plus approximately \$300,000		
Drop in Centers outside Seattle	Develop youth centers as outreach sites in rural/suburban areas of County.	\$2.5 million capital, \$250,000 operating per site		
Computerized Data Safe Harbors system under development	Computerized database of available resources for homeless youth and outreach workers that would include information on service utilization.	Unknown		

MENTAL HEALTH AND DRUG/ALCOHOL SERVICES			
Mental Health Teams	Develop 4 community based mental health teams including full range of professional mental health, chemical dependency, case management and peer outreach services to work on site at drop in centers, shelters, and on the streets.	\$800,000 per team - \$3.2 million total per year	
Harm Reduction Treatment Services	Design, implement and evaluate a harm reduction based outpatient treatment program. Deploy treatment specialists to homeless youth service sites including drop in centers, shelters and transitional housing programs.	\$700,000 if Mental Health Team proposal is funded.	
PLANING AND POLICY DELIVERABLES			
Training for Peer Workers	Develop paraprofessional in-service training program for peer outreach workers.	Unknown	
Single site for University Shelter	Develop a single site for the University Shelter Program	No direct costs	
Shelter Quality Plan Significant Progress made	Expand Overnight Shelter Services Planning project to develop a plan for higher quality services.	No direct costs	
Change state shelter licensing policy	New licensing structure for youth shelters to allow different age ranges spanning age 18 and to allow flexibility to create "continuum of structure" within shelter system.	No direct costs	
Change state teen parent policy	Change laws/regulations that prevent teenage parents under age 18 from accessing transitional housing.	Lobbying	
Family Shelter Plan re: policy on boys	Address the policy issues that cause young men to be separated from their families by family shelters policies, and are a contributing cause to homelessness and family breakup.	Unknown	

Table 4

Significant gaps in the service system persist. Major new resources are needed to create a complete continuum of services that would ensure every youth has the help needed to stay off the streets and meet their individual potentials. This gaps analysis and service recommendations report did not attempt to identify barriers and issues in the existing service system that might be addressed to substantially improve efficiency and effectiveness of the system. The remainder of this report is focused on that task, and a variety of options for actions other than developing additional services will be proposed later in the recommendations section.

Review of the Literature

Causes of Youth Homelessness

Most studies conducted on issues of youth homelessness include data on the family history profile of the youth. All document strong associations between negative childhood experiences and homelessness (Burt, 1998), and high incidences of abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, parental substance abuse, and other family

"Youth services professionals have reported that the most difficult youth to reach are often those who have achieved the greatest success in adapting to street life." -J. Smollar disorganization (Burt, 1998; DeRosa, Montgomery, Kipke, Iverson & Unger, 1999; Fest, 2001; Kufeldt, Durieux & Nimmo, 1992; The students in the course Health Services 523, 2000; Ringwalt, Greene, Robertson & McPheeters, 1989a; Robertson, 1990; Smollar, 2001; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999; Greene, 1995). Whitbeck & Hoyt (1999) conducted a large

multicity study involving in depth interviews of youth and their parents. This study found that reports from youth and parents on both child and parent behavior matched very closely. This increases confidence in the more common youth-only reports of abuse and other family history.

Several studies also document the fact that a large proportion of homeless youth are on the run from government placements or are former foster children:

- Kufeldt, et al. (1992) found that 46% of unsheltered street youth in Calgary, Alberta, were on the run from government care.
- Robertson (1990) found that the majority of a Hollywood, California street youth sample had spent time in foster or group homes.
- Paradise & Horowitz (1994) cite numerous studies:

Many runaway and homeless youth have been involved with child welfare (Kurtz, Jarvis and Kurtz, 1991; Robertson, Koegel and Ferguson, 1989; Shaffer and

Caton, 1984) or juvenile justice systems (Burgess and McCormack, 1986; Garbarino, Schellenbasch and Sebes, 1986). These experiences, however, have generally proven unsuccessful in addressing long-term, underlying problems (Berdie and Wexler, 1980; Fisher and Berdie, 1978) and are viewed unfavorably by most youth involved (Oleson, n.d.).

"Lesbian and gay homeless youth have been found to have a greater and more severe incidence of problems such as depression and suicide than other homeless youth. In one study of homeless street youth, 53% of lesbian and gay adolescents had attempted suicide." -Smollar, 2001

 In a multicity survey of homeless youth, 58% of the youth interviewed in shelters and 71% of those interviewed on the street had been in an institutional setting defined as foster care, group home, psychiatric or mental hospital, juvenile detention, or jail (Greene, 1995).

The Effect of Homelessness on Adolescents

While youth often leave unpleasant and hazardous circumstances for the street, once there their risks only increase, and their prospects for a successful future diminish rapidly. Victimization rates on the street are very high along with difficulty in meeting

"Chronic runaways and homeless youth are literally learning to become marginal adults" -Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999 basic needs, risky sexual behavior, drug and alcohol abuse, criminal behavior (Robertson and Toro, 1998; Greene, 1995; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999), infectious diseases, and depression and suicide (Smollar, 2001). Youth are regularly subjected to extreme stress and trauma while living on the street (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

No hard data exists on whether homeless youth are destined to become homeless adults, but there is evidence that more homeless adults were first homeless as children or youth as compared to the general population (Robertson & Toro, 1998). Longitudinal studies suggest that youth who have run away have higher incidences of justice system involvement, drug/alcohol abuse, and poor educational and career outcomes than those who never ran away (Robertson and Toro, 1998). Whitbeck & Hoyt (1999) developed a risk-amplification model, which suggested that poor developmental pathways as a result of bad childhood circumstances are compounded by street experiences. It is clear that survival on the streets requires youth to engage in risky and criminal behaviors that in turn result in further trauma and severe stress (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). The outlook for successful transition to adulthood is bleak for youth who spend much time on the street (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999; Smollar, 2001).

Service Utilization Patterns

A number of sources document the fact that many homeless youth do not come in contact with shelters and that many shelters operate far below capacity when averaged over the year.

- Ringwalt (1998b) observed that in a youth Risk Behavior Survey only about 2 in 5 of the 1.6 million youth estimated to have had a homeless episode said they made use of a shelter.
- Robertson's (1990) survey found that only 15% of youth identified shelters as their usual sleeping place.
- Smoller (2001) cites that "A report by the Office of the Inspector General estimated that only one in twelve homeless youth ever comes into contact with the shelter system."

Difficulties in providing shelter to homeless youth are not unique to Seattle. In fact, utilization rates in King County (Meyers & Shaw, 2000; King County Shelter Data Report, 2000) are above current rates in Alaska and above the 1995 national average (Green, 1995).

- Alaska Association of Homes for Children (2001) found that shelter programs averaged only 58% of capacity.
- Green's (1995) national, multicity survey found that, "on any given night, 55 percent of shelter beds were occupied."
- Two sources described street youth as reluctant to use services, especially shelter (Burt, 1998; Greene, 1995).

Studies of underutilization, sited above, are not clear on the source of the problem. A combination of difficulty in finding and accessing shelter, unwillingness to accept the level of structure and control imposed by programs, and other barriers are all potential causes. While youths' reluctance to use shelter services is frustrating, it is important to keep in mind the role of shelter in providing safety and exit pathways from the streets.

- DeRosa, et al. (1998) and Whitbeck & Hoyt (1999) both assert that shelter, along with outreach, is an essential service that needs to be made more accessible.
- DeRosa, et al. (1998) conclude that "Because shelters and drop-in centers act as gateways to other services and offer intervention potential for these hard-to-reach youth, it is vital that barriers to use of these services are eliminated."

"The first program priority is safety.
The developmental costs of victimization are too great to ignore."
-Whitbeck and Hoyte, 1999

- Whitbeck & Hoyt (1999) agree: "Our data clearly indicate that this may mean not waiting until runaway adolescents are 'ready to commit to a program' but developing attractive safe havens for the young people to move in and out of during periods of independence. Peer or near-age mentors may be necessary to engage and guide them."
- Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2001) suggests an alternative view of utilization rates: "Optimally, facilities would like to operate below a certain capacity so runaway youth are not turned away." The Institute goes on to recommend looking at the highs and lows on any given day rather than averaging all stays during the month.

Adolescent Development and Implications for Practice

The literature on developmental issues related to youth homelessness provides more insight into the reasons youth are on the street, the challenges, and the opportunities in working with them. Smollar (2001) discusses four specific characteristics that foster positive developmental pathways from childhood to adulthood:

- A sense of industry and competency,
- A feeling of connectedness to others and to society,
- A sense of control over one's fate in life, and
- A stable sense of identity.

Each of these characteristics is missing in the lives of children subjected to abuse or those living in otherwise disorganized families, causing them to compensate by attempting to meet these needs through street culture (Fest, 2001). Both Smollar and Fest point out that success in adapting to street life runs counter to success in mainstream society.

"Usually kids don't like counselors or anything like that. They like to talk to friends and it gets them like a load off their chest." -Homeless youth quoted in Whitbeck

Whitbeck & Hoyt (1999) agree: "For runaways and homeless adolescents, even 'resilience' takes on a different meaning. Successful adaptation on the streets requires skills that often run counter to successful adult development." While these youth possess remarkable strength and ability to survive and overcome horrific

circumstances, the realities of life on the streets turn those very strengths against them, diminishing their prospects for positive development within society.

These authors are also in agreement on the implications for practice. Programs need to foster protective factors related to these developmental needs.

- Provision of consistent, caring and supportive relationships is a common recommendation (Smollar, 2001; Fest, 2001; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999; Jarvis, Lindsey & Williams, 2001)
- Opportunities for active participation by youth (Fest, 2001), especially in decisions affecting them
- Involvement in activities that promote a sense of connectedness to a group or community
- High expectations from adults in their lives are very important (Fest, 2001)
- Recognition of the adult-like status of these young people in teaching the life skills they have missed in their early entry into independence (Whitbeck & Hoyt 1999).

Youth tend to concur with some of these ideas. In studies that asked youth what is helpful or attractive to them about programs, they consistently say people who care about them (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999) and engage with them as persons, rather than clients (Jarvis, Lindsey & Williams, 2001). Jarvis explains "This is not to suggest that helpers should violate professional ethics in their involvement with youth. Rather it is to highlight the deeply felt need of these youth to be cared for and appreciated as persons in their own right and to challenge professionals to find their own best paths toward such caring relationships with youth." Perhaps the role of the professional can be to help youth connect with caring adults who can fulfill this role appropriately and over the long term. Mentor relationships, extended family, and appropriate adult friends can often fulfill such a role with a little support.

These ideas are not new. Most homeless youth programs attempt to employ all of these strategies already. They are not easy to implement however.

- The short-term nature of many placements and programs, especially shelter, make it difficult to provide <u>long-term supportive relationships</u> that youth can count on.
- High expectations are also difficult with youth who have so much working against them and whose behavior may often be challenging to deal with.
- Involvement of youth in programs is gradually becoming a reality, but responding to their input on decisions that affect them in a way that fosters a sense of control over their own life is harder. Many decisions are based on law, liability issues, program regulations required by funders or licensors, and court proceedings. Sometimes insuring that a youth is well informed about what is going on and what to expect is the best that can be done. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in national and state youth policy.
- Programs need also to look for ways to clarify the choices youth do have and find even small things that may serve to provide youth with a <u>sense of control over</u> their circumstances.

Any means of responding to these crucial developmental needs is a sure way to engage youth and even excite them about the possibilities for a better future.

Policy Directions

A variety of policy implications could be advanced. Many issues faced by homeless youth and those who provide services for them are of a national or global nature. While the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act provides Federal funding for outreach, shelter and transitional living for youth across the nation, it has some limitations, particularly in the shelter component, in its focus on very short term shelter with family reunification as the primary objective for all youth using the program. National policy promoting youth development has not proven strong enough to prevent states and local governments from moving toward criminalization of runaway and homeless youth. A more comprehensive policy on homeless youth is needed which recognizes the reality, now well documented, that for the overwhelming majority of homeless youth family is not available. Such a policy would focus less on family reunification and more on safety, youth development, and independent living. "This policy should recognize the need to begin where the runaways currently are in their developmental trajectories and to build from there" (Whitbeck & Hoyt 1999). The Youth Development movement, and the Younger Americans Act promoted by the National Network For Youth and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is a beginning.

In the absence of a comprehensive national policy, enhanced state and local policy could prove beneficial as well. As of 1994, "Only six states (Alaska, Florida, Louisiana, Maine, New York, and Tennessee) have enacted their own runaway and homeless youth laws. Only New York and Florida appropriate funds to support the activities called for by these laws." (Paradise & Horowitz, 1994) Since 1994, other states have attempted homeless youth policy. A Colorado legislative initiative for homeless youth failed, but one in Minnesota was successful in developing state resources to support homeless youth.

Washington is one state that has since developed some policy in this area, with the Becca Bill in 1996 and the HOPE Act in 1999. The HOPE Act provides State resources for shelter and transitional living for homeless youth. While the eligibility requirements and intake process for these services continue some of the barriers to effective engagement of youth into services common to many such programs, this law is a good beginning on a comprehensive state policy on homeless youth. The Becca law, on the other hand, fails to acknowledge the research evidence that homeless youth in general cannot return home and runs counter to the national youth development policy which does exist by providing for incarceration of youth for runaway behavior and other status offences without due process.

Discussion

Several facts emerge from this review of the literature which are relevant to the current task:

Causes and Effects of Homelessness on Youth

- Numerous studies document the fact that the vast majority of homeless youth have experienced significant childhood trauma, often including physical and sexual abuse by someone in their home.
- Research has demonstrated that parent and youth reports on both child and parent behavior match very closely. This increases confidence in the more common youth-only reports of abuse and other family history.
- It is also well documented that a large proportion of homeless youth have spent time in foster care and many are on the run from a state placement.
- Life on the street is extremely hazardous. Youth are subjected to further trauma
 that exacerbates the emotional and developmental results of earlier childhood
 trauma at home. There is little data on the long-term consequences of youth
 homelessness, but studies do suggest that the outlook is bleak for youth who
 spend much time on the street.

Shelter Utilization

- A number of sources document the fact that many homeless youth do not come in contact with shelters and that many shelters operate far below capacity when averaged over the year.
- While low occupancy levels look like inefficiency and a waste of resources and probably are to some degree, optimal occupancy rates must be below 100% in order to maintain capacity to fulfill shelter's role of providing safe passage from the street for vulnerable youth in crisis.

Developmental Issues

Homeless youth usually suffer developmentally as a result of repeated trauma and loss and early assumption of adult responsibilities. These special developmental needs must be addressed throughout the service system. Some key factors in developmentally appropriate program components for homeless youth include:

- Long-term supportive relationships that youth can count on
- High expectations
- Involvement of youth in designing and operating programs
- Programs that look for ways to provide youth with a sense of control over their circumstances

Policy Implications

A more comprehensive national policy on homeless youth is needed which recognizes the reality, now well documented, that for the overwhelming majority of homeless youth family is not available. This policy should recognize the special developmental needs of runaway and homeless youth, and the realities of their situations.

What We Know from Local Reports

Substantial information from local sources already exists on barriers to shelter and utilization issues. Several sources provide information on the estimated or actual percentage of occupancy of shelter and transitional housing programs. This information is included below as the basis for our problem statement.

Information on Actual Shelter Utilization Rates

Five Sources of data on utilization rates exist. Each of these sources reflect slightly different rates. However, all measure utilization by multiplying the number of beds that could possibly be used in the facility by the number of days in the report period to determine capacity. Then the number of beds actually used each night is multiplied by the number of nights in the report period to determine a utilization figure. Then the actual utilization is divided by capacity to determine the utilization rate.

This method does not take into account beds that may be unusable for any number of reasons nor does it reflect fluctuations in the number of youth coming in and out of each shelter each night. Some facilities may be full and some empty on any given night. These youth crisis shelters are intended as a means of protecting vulnerable youth from harm on the street. If average utilization were high, youth would regularly be turned away to the street. Therefore the optimal *average* utilization rate is probably in the vicinity of 75%. In fact, some shelters currently operate at over 90% capacity on average. Crisis capacity is not a need within the transitional housing system, so optimal utilization rates should be higher than those of shelter programs. However the necessary intake process, difficulty in contacting homeless youth on a waiting list and other unavoidable circumstances suggest a maximum average utilization of 80-90%.

Hope Centers/RLSP/Secure CRC Data

These programs were designed to meet the needs of homeless dependent youth (Hope, RLSP) and chronic runaways (Secure CRC). During the first year of implementation, they were severely underutilized. In the last half of 2001, Hope Centers were operating at 36% of capacity and RLSPs at 70%. The last period for which CRC utilization was reported was 2000, at which time Secure CRCs operated at 40-50% of capacity. Key barriers have been identified including:

- Disagreements between providers and state caseworkers about whether youth were eligible for the placement
- Difficulty in establishing dependency for youth to meet legal eligibility
- Reluctance among youth to engage or re-engage with DSHS
- Variable responses from police in utilizing CRCs

Some of these barriers have been addressed already and some progress has been made on increasing utilization.

One Night Count

The Coalition for the Homeless conducts a One Night Count of Homeless People each year. This year's survey found a total of 229 people under the age of 25 staying in programs designated as youth and young adult shelters or transitional housing. A total of 110 shelter beds were available to youth and young adults and 57 people stayed in those beds. This represents approximately 52% utilization, an increase from 43% in 2000. On the night of the count, a large church shelter which generally reports average utilization near 100% was not open. The church shelter that was open on that night generally has very low utilization. This is one example of a problem in using averages to represent the status of shelter utilization.

"It Takes More Than Shelter" Survey Report

In spring of 2000, a survey of homeless youth shelter and transitional housing providers was completed. Sixteen programs responded to questions concerning utilization of beds in the previous month. The program respondents had a capacity of 209 beds per night. On average during the report month, 43 beds were unused each night. Combined, the programs responding operated at 79% capacity. Fourteen of the sixteen responding programs operated at less than 100% capacity during the report month.

Service Provider Interviews

In late 2001, shelter program managers were asked about the average utilization over the past year and what they considered the expected maximum utilization to be for their programs. (A full report on this survey follows.) Licensed shelters projected a 75% utilization rate, but averaged only 40 – 44%. Among licensed shelter programs the average utilization rates ranged from 14% to 76%. There seemed to be significant variation in utilization rates both between programs and within the same program over time. Unlicensed shelters projected 100% utilization. Those serving over 18 year old youth averaged 97% utilization for the recent quarter, the only data available. The unlicensed program serving under 18 only averaged 8-17% utilization over the past year. Again, the range in utilization rates among this small group of programs demonstrates that averages across programs are poor indicators of the general status of shelter utilization.

King County Shelter Data

All licensed shelters and one transitional housing program participate in the King County Shelter Database. In 2001 eight programs were included with a total of 80 beds. A total of 458 unduplicated youth were served in 2001. The total bednights provided in 2001 was 10,557, which calculates to a 36% rate of utilization. These data are currently under review to determine whether some beds were not reported on. The utilization rate may actually be higher for some of the programs included in this database.

Discussion

Each of these reports uses the maximum number of beds for which a particular facility could be licensed or approved as the measure of capacity. Capacity may not

be realistic for utilization, because in fact it reflects flexibility and potential, but not necessarily intent. A range of issues affect the extent to which the maximum physical capacity of a facility is utilized from day to day. The most often mentioned include the following issues.

◆ Client characteristics and staffing ratios determine utilization. Many programs are not funded to exceed certain staffing levels. Thus beds cannot be utilized because there is not adequate funding for staff. Characteristics of the current population also affect intakes. For example, if a program has several youth with behavior management issues, it may not be safe to add more youth to the program. These are clinical decisions that are made all the time. In addition, many programs said their functional capacity fluctuates depending on the level of need and behavioral issues present in the milieu.

Sometimes this is based on practice wisdom and sometimes on licensing or contract requirements, which regulate client: staff ratios stemming from the behavioral level of youth. Youth who have been assessed with high needs for supervision require a higher staff-to-youth ratio.

For most programs however, empty beds have nothing to do with demand, but rather with the complexities of operating this special kind of residential service.

- Repair and maintenance needs affect utilization. Other reasons that one or more beds might be empty on a given night include repair and maintenance. Adolescents in crisis are volatile and often take out their pain and frustration on furnishings, walls, doors and windows. Beds or rooms containing multiple beds may not be usable for any number of days while repair is arranged.
- ◆ Holding beds for youth affects utilization. The central function of these programs is to protect vulnerable youth who are in crisis from harm on the street. When possible with available resources, therapeutic and transitional services are also provided. These youth are dealing with repeated trauma, loss and rejection by those who were supposed to care for them. Reengagement and development of trust with a caregiver are difficult and nonlinear processes. For this reason, beds are often held for as long as possible for a youth who runs.
- ◆ Intake processes affect utilization. For a variety of safety, health and regulatory reasons, intake into a residential program may take multiple days. Beds may become available with no notice and it may take several days to weeks (in the case of transitional housing) for the next youth to move in.
- ◆ Designated beds affect utilization counts. Several programs are funded at least in part by contracts with the State or County for a certain number of beds to be used only for youth referred by the contracting agency. These designated beds cannot be used by other youth when empty.

In the case of some programs, there may be less demand for a specific type of service offered. This low demand may have to do with program structure and rules

not fitting the needs of the population eligible for the program, Becca reporting procedures, or with some negative reputation among youth or referral providers. For most programs, however, empty beds have nothing to do with demand, but rather with the complexities of operating a special kind of residential service. It must be clear that all youth shelters are not alike and most bear no resemblance to adult shelters in the way they operate or in functional capacity and utilization. Even the unlicensed shelters for young adults have additional concerns related to adolescent development.

Finally, youth shelters are designed to be a crisis response that protects very vulnerable and very troubled and alone children from the dangers of the street. While on the surface all of the youth who use the programs may not fit that description, capacity to provide a bed for the youth who does needs to be maintained somewhere in the system at all times. Therefore maximum capacity necessarily needs to be well below 100%.

Analysis of Three Local Reports on Homeless Youth

Three local reports exist on homeless youth that include recommendations relevant to this study. These reports are briefly described below and a matrix of recommendations is included showing areas of agreement between the three. From this matrix we have identified recommendations common to the reports that seem particularly relevant to the issue at hand or most appropriate as potential projects for the Task Force to undertake. A simple feasibility analysis for each recommendation is included as well.

It Takes More Than Shelter

Two surveys, one of homeless youth shelter/transitional housing providers and one of people who regularly make referrals to these programs, were completed in spring of 2000. The purpose of the surveys was to collect data on the reasons for underutilization of residential programs for youth from these two points of view. The report, "It Takes More than Shelter," analyzed the data and concluded that complex reasons for underutilization exist, ranging from unavoidable regular turnaround times for filling vacancies to unwillingness of youth to use programs. The two biggest issues emerging were a simple lack of referrals and the inability of most programs to serve the many youth who present behaviors that could be hazardous to other residents because of untreated substance use and mental health issues.

NEST Study

The Needs Evaluation of Street Teens project was conducted by students in the Health Services 523: Community Health and Needs Assessment course at the University of Washington, School of Public Health and Community Medicine, Spring, 2000, at the request of the U-District-University Partnership for Youth. The aims of the project were to collect and synthesize information that could be used to improve the availability and appropriateness of services for homeless youth in the University District, Capitol Hill, and Westlake areas in Seattle. In order to accomplish these objectives, students analyzed service data and conducted focus groups and surveys

with youth, providers and other experts. The major recommendations included improved service information; improved coordination of services; new models of service; and additional services needed in the areas of shelter, mental health and drug/alcohol services.

Homeless Youth Charette Report Addressing the Needs of Homeless Youth As mentioned previously, a Charette was sponsored in May of 2000 by the Street Youth Task Force to design service strategies to fill gaps in the system for homeless youth. The Charette also included a beginning analysis of system-wide issues, other than lack of services, which impede efficient and effective service provision. The report includes background on homeless youth, local service data, a thorough analysis of service capacity and gaps, a list of recommended service strategies to fill those gaps, and a list of recommended strategies to address system-wide issues. These system issues are the focus of the current study and are included along with those from the previous two reports in the analysis that follows.

Synthesis of Recommendations from Three Reports on Improvement of Services for Homeless Youth

Recommendations	Charette	More Than Shelter	NEST
Policy, Funding and Regulatory Initiatives			
System or Coalition Building	•	•	•
Umbrella organization, integration across systems, and meetings with all providers.			
Improved Use of Technology	•	•	*
Networked data system to identify beds, coordinated referral system, and web page for service availability			
Change Licensing	•		•
Reduce barriers to access by expanding overnight shelter hours and reducing supervision requirements.			
Create New Funding Models	•	•	
Reduce competition, coordinate funding, and encourage less restrictive funding.			
Address Issues in Child Welfare System	•	•	
Increase funding, program enhancement for foster care, increase prevention efforts with high-risk families, and examine policies.			
Programmatic Service Enhancements			
Increase and Improve Treatment Services	•	•	•
Training to better engage youth, prevent staff burnout, and focus on drug/alcohol services			
Revise and Review Models of Service	•	•	•
Address potential barriers to service including, rules, hours, intake process, no-tolerance/abstinence model, make more youth friendly, integrate group treatment models, harm reduction, peer education/outreach.			

Table 5

Existing Recommendations Appropriate for Street Youth Task Force

The following five strategies were selected from the chart above as those most likely to address the mission of the Task Force and to utilize the specific expertise and resources that exist in the Task Force. These five strategies will be the focus of investigation throughout this project. The final report will suggest specific actions to address one or more of these recommendations.

- 1. Build system to coordinate funding and services
- 2. Revise and review models of service

- 3. Licensing changes
- 4. Modify funding regulations which create barriers/complexity
- 5. Staff development to improve residential program capacity and outcomes

These five recommendations along with new ones developed through further research done over the past several months will be addressed further in the recommendation sections.

Summary of Focus Group Interviews

Barriers to Shelter Utilization

Three focus group interviews were conducted in August 2001 at three youth-serving agencies, Lambert House, Peace for the Streets by Kids from the Streets (PSKS), and YouthCare's Orion Center. The purpose of these focus groups was twofold: to get input early in the project from those intended to benefit from the work and to field test some of the questions we have about shelter utilization. Below is a summary of the youth's responses to questions about their use of shelter followed by a summary of findings from the focus groups as relate to the upcoming survey.

Focus Group Results

Demographic Characteristics (N=20)

	% N
Youth of Color	45% (9)
Male	65% (13)
Female	20% (4)
LGBQ	40% (8)
Transgender	15% (3)
Homeless	60% (12)

Table 6

Age - Mean = 17.8 years. Range = 16-23 years.

Knowledge and Use of Shelter Systems

- Participants were generally knowledgeable about shelter services available to them
- Participants had not actually used many of the youth shelters available to them.
- Seventy-five percent of the participants had used Denny Place, YouthCare, Teen Hope, Cocoon House, or University District Shelters.

Reasons Youth Were Turned Away Or Kicked Out of Shelter

- Age: youth is too old (over 18)
- Behavior: youth broke curfew, other rules, or was accused of using drugs

- Space: there was no bed available
- Screening: youth not eligible because of personal history, did not have ID, or parent disapproved

Reasons Youth Refuse Shelter/Things They Don't Like About It

- There is no shelter in the area they live in/they don't want to leave the neighborhood for shelter
- Inhospitable climate created by staff or other shelter guests
- Hours: They need to sleep later and leave at 11, or 9 at the earliest, and come in later in the evening – especially on weekends
- Getting your name run, runaway reporting
- Shelters are not clean and do not have enough of the resources youth need to make using them worthwhile
- Rules against drugs, pets, partners and phone calls, and/or required religious activities

Reasons Youth Will Use Shelters

- In a crisis situation, like getting kicked out of home, being really sick, or cops busting the squat
- When it snows or the weather is really bad
- When wanting to start over, transition off the street

Things Youth Like Or Would Like to See in Shelters

- A shelter on Capitol Hill
- Longer hours for overnight shelter or flexible curfews in other programs
- Appropriate population mix/segregation and adequate room for all especially by age up to 25, gender, also sexual orientation
- Staff that care
- Comprehensive services/accommodations: clothing, food, internet access, adequate showers and laundry, activities and services to meet special needs and assist with problems
- More flexible rules about partners, curfew, pets
- A variety of shelter/housing models to meet various needs: combined drop-in and shelter came up several times, self-managed shelter, transitional and lowincome housing models

The ideas generated through these focus groups were utilized in interviews with providers and individual youth interviews conducted over the past several months. Further information about the efficacy of these youth proposals and potential for implementation is included in the following two sections and in the recommendations.

Summary of Youth Interviews

Methodology

The Street Youth Task Force initiated a pilot project to evaluate the barriers to shelter and housing utilization by homeless youth in King County. The Youth Survey was the second component of a three-phase evaluation strategy, which also included focus groups with youth and provider surveys. The purpose of the Youth Survey was to elicit information from youth on shelter utilization patterns and service attributes among subpopulations of youth. These data were collected in order to explore the feasibility of modifying existing service models and to assist agencies in their efforts to increase shelter utilization among homeless youth.

Nine social service agencies in the Seattle/King County area participated in the evaluation process. The outreach and drop-in staff of these agencies administered the youth survey: YouthCare, Friends of Youth, New Horizons Youth Ministries, University District Youth Center, Auburn Youth Resources, Seattle Children's Home Street Links program, Central Youth and Family Services, PSKS, and 45th Street Clinic. Staff from these agencies participated in a three hour training that provided guidelines for obtaining consent, administering the survey, providing incentives, and confidentiality. Agencies had an opportunity for input on survey questions and to review the survey prior to implementation.

Agency personnel who administered surveys were instructed to integrate the survey as part of their routine outreach and drop-in work with youth. Surveys were completed during the same time period in order to avoid duplication of youth participants. The dates were November 7 and 8, 2001. Youth were given an incentive for completing the survey and agencies completed a receipt for every incentive.

The survey administered to youth in this evaluation process was completely anonymous; no identifying information with the exception of Date of Birth was collected on youth. Services offered and provided to youth were not affected by their decision regarding participation in the survey. We did not anticipate any harm to any youth who answered the survey questions and there were no reports of discomfort on the part of any youth who agreed to participate. In order to insure youth consent and comfort with the survey, the following guidelines were implemented:

- Outreach workers or line staff that provide direct services to homeless youth were selected to administer surveys;
- 2. Surveys could be completed at any site or location deemed suitable by agency staff, which was comfortable for youth; and
- 3. Youth were provided with a resource list of services by staff administering the survey and provided services in a routine manner.

Screening Criteria

Youth who met the following criteria were approached to complete the survey:

1. Ages 12 – 22;

- 2. Currently out of home and not using shelter or housing program;
- 3. Sleeping on the street, in squats, or other unstable or unsafe situation; and
- 4. Able to comprehend the purpose and intent of the survey.

Survey Limitations

The survey was implemented with the intention of gathering data on the population of youth who live on the street and tend not to use shelters. This population has seldom been the sole focus of evaluation studies. These youth are difficult to find because they tend to not use services as often as other subpopulations of high-risk youth. Our strategies included using outreach workers versus trained research staff, conducting surveys in the street environment where youth were located, and limiting the scope of survey questions. Thus, we were successful in surveying 105 youth, who met the screening criteria. However, we were unable to explore in-depth several areas of interest. These data raise additional questions about shelter utilization and the needs of youth who do not use shelters and un-served youth.

FINDINGS

Description of Sample

Surveys were completed with 105 youth from nine social service agencies in Seattle-King County. Surveys were completed within a 2-3 day time frame to avoid duplication of youth surveyed. Eight surveys of youth over age 24 were deleted. After preliminary data analysis, the subcommittee decided to attempt to increase the number of youth who were under age18 in the sample. As a result, an additional 8 youth were surveyed in February 2002 and added to the sample. The table below shows the number of surveys completed by each participating agency.

Agency	%	(n)
Auburn Youth Resources	10.5%	11
Central youth and Family Services	13.3%	14
45 th Street Clinic	15.2%	16
Friends of Youth	3.8%	4
Lambert House	1.9%	2
New Horizons Ministries	25.7%	27
PSKS	7.6%	8
Seattle Children's Home	11.4%	12
YouthCare	10.5%	11
TOTAL		105

Table 7

Age - The age of youth surveyed ranged from 14 -24 years. The mean age was 19 years (SD = 2.1 years). Of the sample, 21.9% (23) were age 17 or younger. We attempted to focus this survey on youth age 18 or younger that were not in shelters or stable housing. The low number of youth under 18 in the sample raises a number of questions. Data from focus groups, provider surveys, and agency outreach workers provide several possible explanations:

- 1. Youth serving agencies and supporting programs such as Pro Youth have had a positive impact on reducing the number of homeless youth in the area.
- 2. Recent decreases in juvenile crime, and improvements in local schools may have impacted the numbers of homeless youth in this age group.
- 3. A strong local economy has decreased economic stress on families.
- 4. DCFS is effectively placing dependent youth.
- 5. Outreach workers noted more difficulty in getting younger street youth to complete the survey.

Conversely, it may be argued that: 1) Outreach workers were not able to access minor youth living in squats and other unstable and undesirable situations for this survey and a greater effort is needed to uncover those locations, and 2) Recruitment for this survey did not adequately cover the number of minor youth who are "couch surfing" and not accessing services.

Gender - Of the sample, 54.3% (57) were male, 42.9% (45) were female, and 2.9% (3) reported being transgender.

Sexual Orientation - The majority of the sample 77% (81) reported their sexual orientation as "Straight". Only 1% (1) reported as "gay", 16% (17) as "bisexual, 3.8% (4) as "Questioning" and 1% (1) as "Queer". Thus, 22% (23) of the sample considered themselves to be in the gay, bisexual, questioning, or queer categories.

What is your Sexual Orientation?

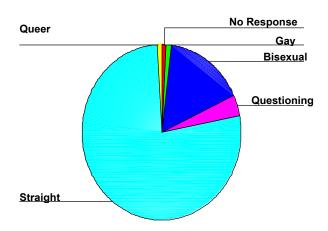


Chart 4

Ethnicity - A majority of the sample reported being Caucasian 52.4% (55) and 47.6% (50) reported belonging to a specific ethnic group or as multi-ethnic. The table and chart below show the participants' ethnic backgrounds.

Ethnicity

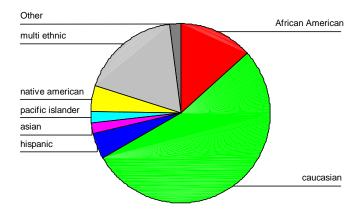


Chart 5

Ethnicity	% n
African - American	13.3% (14)
Asian	1.9% (2)
Caucasian	53.3% (56)
Hispanic	4.8% (5)
Native American	4.8% (5)
Pacific Islander	1.9% (2)
Multi-ethnic	18.1% (19)
Other	1.9% (2)
Total	105

Table 8

Current Housing Status

A goal of this survey was to emphasize youth who were not using shelters. In that regard, the survey was successful, although we anticipated a lower mean age for the group. Of the sample, 53.4% (62) were living on the street, in a squat or in a car at the time of the survey. Only 3.8% (4) were in a shelter or transitional living program. The remainder were not in permanent or stable situations.

Where did	· -		Friend/ Same			Motol	Friend/ Older	Home/ Temp	Shelter	TLP
you sleep last night?	21.9% (23)	21% (22)	16.2% (17)	10.5% (11)	9.5% (10)	7.6% (8)	5.7% (6)	3.8% (4)	2.9% (3)	1% (1)

Table 9

Parenting

Over a quarter of the sample, 27.6% (29) reported they were either pregnant or parenting. Of these, five young women were currently pregnant. The majority of youth

who reported being parents had only one child, but four participants had two children, and two reported having three children. Of those reporting to be parents, 11 were male and 17 were female. The ages of children ranged from 3 months to seven years. Of those respondents who reported being parents, 15 stated their child did not live with them, 8 reported their child/children did live with them. Information was missing or unclear for the other cases. The living situations of the 8 female youth with children living with them were as follows:

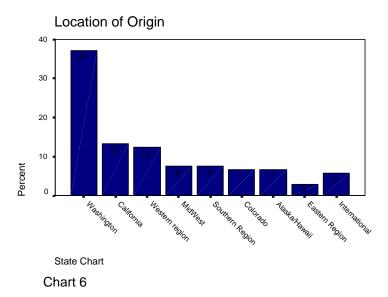
Living Situations of Youth with Children Living with Them

Age	Ethnicity	Age of Child	Living Situation
17	African –American	3 months	Older Street Friend
18	Multi ethnic	8 months	Same age friend from street
18	Caucasian	17 months	Motel
18	African American	3 years	Friends & Family
20	Asian American	2 years	Older Friend
20	African American	7 months old	Friend Same Age
20	Caucasian	9 months	Family Friend
22	Caucasian	4, 2 & 4 mos.	Street Friend

Table 10

Those youth who were parents were more likely to be youth of color. Of the 29 parents, 62% (18) were youth of color and 38% (11) were Caucasian.

State of Origin - Youth were asked what state they were from and 37% (39) reported they were from Washington State (2 youth did not answer this question.). Thus, 61% (64) of the sample came to Washington at sometime during their childhood. We did not anticipate this response and so did not ask at what age they arrived in Washington. These data were collected on the nine youth surveyed in February. Of these nine youth, six reported they were from a state or country other than Washington: Montana (1), Alaska (1), Oregon (2), Colorado (1), and the Dominican Republic (1). The length of time they had been in Washington ranged from 4 days to 15 years. The length of time they had been in Seattle ranged from four days to four years. The responses to this question are certainly of interest, but we were not able to gather enough detail on the reasons for family moves and current family situations to draw conclusions as to what these data mean for service provision. This finding should also be understood within the context of population movement and relocation that are the norm for this area.



Youth were also asked: "Could you go home?" and, as a part of this question, they were asked to specify where home was currently. Of the 73 youth who responded to the second part of the question, 49% (26) responded that "home" was out of state; 2.7% (2) reported their "home" was in Washington State, and 23% (17) reported their "home" was in Seattle. Seattle/King County, like other urban areas is a center for urban migration and immigrant populations. Thus, social services must be prepared to serve the needs of local youth, and youth and families who migrate and immigrate to the area. The question that needs further exploration is: "What happens to these families and their parenting?"

Current Status

Basic Needs - Youth were asked several questions to determine how they were taking care of themselves at the present time. Youth in this sample were aware of and used services for basic needs, except for housing. The questions and responses are listed in the table below:

	Squat	Street	Friend/ Same	Car	Other	Hotel/ Motel	Friend/ Older	Home/ Temp	Shelter	TLP
Where did you sleep last night?	21.9% (23)	21% (22)	16.2% (17)	10.5% (11)	9.5% (10)	7.6% (8)	5.7% (6)	3.8% (4)	2.9% (3)	1% (1)
Where will you sleep tonight?	18.1% (19)	15.2% (16)	15.2% (16)	8.6% (9)	16.2% (17)	4.8% (5)	6.7% (7)	1.9% (2)	12.4% (13)	1% (1)
	Today	Yesterday	> 3 days							
When did you eat last?	75.2% (79)	24.8% (26)								
When did you shower last?	28.6% (30)	32.4% (34)	15.2% (16)							

Table 11

Youth were asked where they had last eaten and 96 youth responded. Of this group, 47% (45) had used social services including: YouthCare Orion Center, New Horizons, Teen Feed, UDYC, PSKS, YouthCare Straley and Shelter programs, NW Harvest, Lutheran Program, SKY, and a clinic. The remainder of the sample had eaten at fast food or other restaurants, grocery stores, home, school and on the street, 40% (38); and 14% (13) had eaten at a friend's house. Thirty-four youth (35%) stated they would use services for their next meal; 22% (21) did not know where they would eat.

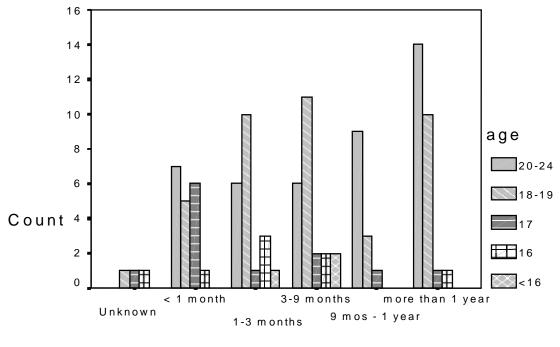
Youth were asked where they had showered last and again, 96 responded. Of this group, 32% (31) had used social services including New Horizons, UDYC, Lambert House, University Presbyterian Church, YouthCare, and the YMCA. Fourteen percent (13) reported using Urban Rest Stop, public restrooms, jail, crack house, Greenlake Park, a church, and jail. Forty-three percent (41) had showered last at a friend's house and the remaining 11% (11) youth had used a motel or family member's house.

Time on the Street - Youth were asked: "How long they had been on the street this time?" The responses ranged from one day to over a year. Nearly one third of the sample, 31.4% (33), had been on the street one year or more. Forty-two percent (44) had been on the street between three and nine months. About a quarter of the youth, 24% (25) had been on the street from one day to one month. Although there were not significant differences between age groups and length of time on the street, the trend was for older youth to have been on the street for a longer period of time; older were more likely to be in the " 9 months - one year" and "more than one year" time categories for length of time on the street.

We suggest that it would be important to understand more clearly why this older group has remained on the street and has not been able to transition into more stable life patterns. One area that needs further investigation is their involvement and history with the criminal justice system.

Time on Street	%	n
1 day	1%	1
1 week	6.7%	7
2 weeks	7.6%	8
3 weeks	2.9%	3
1 month	5.7%	6
3 months	20%	21
6 months	15.2%	16
9 months	6.7%	7
1 year	5.7%	6
More than 1 year	25.7%	27

Table 12



street time

Chart 7

Youth were asked, "Where could you be living now?" Ninety-five youth responded. Of these youth, 59% (56) stated "nowhere," "don't know," or "other," which included car, street, shelter, prison, etc. Ten youth said transitional living and four said they could be with a friend or relative. Twenty-six percent (25) said they could be at home. Of the 25 youth who said they could be at home, 14 were male and 9 were female. This subgroup left home at a mean age of 16.5 years. It was beyond the scope of this brief survey to elicit details of family relationships, but research findings have repeatedly described problems, including abuse and neglect, in the histories of street youth. Although they may know where "home" is, it may not be a viable option for them due to abuse, neglect, or the parent/s' willingness to have them in the home. The section below provides further information on the history of system involvement for youth in this sample.

System Involvement

The following questions were asked to help identify the support systems youth were involved with both in the past and currently.

System Involvement % Yes (n)

		·
Have you ever had a state caseworker?	48.6% (51)	
Do you have a caseworker now?	43.8% (46)	CYFS, SCS, & SLY (10), DSHS (7), YouthCare (6), UDYC (5), New Horizons (5)
Have you ever been held in Juvenile Detention?	54.3% (57)	
Have you ever had a probation counselor?	49.5% (52)	
Do you have a probation counselor now?	15.2% (16)	
Have you ever runaway from Home?	64.8% (68)	
Have you ever run from a placement?	32.4% (34)	
Has a run report ever been filed on you?	41% (43)	

Table 13

The information reported above is self-report data. It appears that a little less than half of the sample had been state involved and received state services. Well over half of the sample, 65%, reported having run away from home, although only 41% responded that a run report had ever been filed on them. Previous studies suggest that although youth "run," many families have dissolved and in fact there is no one to continue caring for the youth.

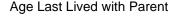
Over half of the sample reported having been held in juvenile detention, 54.3% (57); and 49.5% (52) said they had a probation counselor. The relationship between homelessness among youth and involvement in the juvenile justice system has not been examined as thoroughly as it should be. Intervening variables and additional constraints for use of shelters requires further exploration, particularly since criminal histories are often criteria for exclusion.

On Street/Runaway Status

The limited scope of this brief evaluative survey prohibited gathering extensive data on the personal histories of youth who participated. We are able to report that:

- 1. 96.2% stated they had lived at home with a parent for some length of time.
- 2. Sixty-nine percent of the sample (72) reported having been kicked out of their home.
- 3. Over half of the youth surveyed, 58% (61), said they could not go home.

They were then asked to what age they had lived with a parent. The range was age 3 to age 22. The mean age was 14.63 (Std. 3.67). Youth were asked again if they could go home, where home would be and who would be there. Fifty-eight percent (61) responded "no" they could not go home and 41% (43) responded "yes" they could go home. In the qualitative questions, we asked where home was. Of those who said "yes" they could go home, home was out of state for 21 youth, home was in Washington for 11, and home was in the Seattle area for 10 youth. For those who said "no," they could not go home, 28 did not specify where home might be, 15 said it was out of sate, 9 said in Washington State and 7 said in the Seattle area.



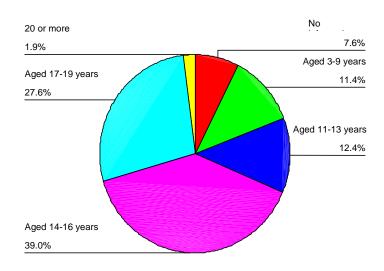


Chart 8

Could you go home?

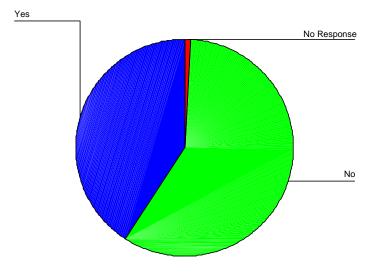


Chart 9

Youth were asked to list all of the agencies they have been involved with in Seattle/King County. There were multiple responses from youth indicating their overall knowledge of services available to them.

Agencies Youth Were Involved With

Agency	# of youth listing agency
YouthCare	49
New Horizons	43
UDYC	35
Street Links for Youth	26
Teen Feed	16
Capitol Hill Drop-In	15
Other -	22

Table 14

Other category included: PSKS, DSHS, FOY, CYFS, 45th Street Clinic, Denny Shelter, Urban Rest Stop, YWCA, YMCA Teen Hope, CPS, University Presbyterian, Street Youth Ministries, Lambert House, Auburn Youth Services, Ryther. The most common responses were for street based services, which suggests these services are successfully contacting youth.

SHELTER

Do you use shelters sometimes now? Yes 34.3% (36)

Did last shelter experience help you? Yes 34.3% (36)

Where can you go for Shelter? Youth were aware of shelters that are available to them. Their responses included: University District Church shelters (40), Denny Place (16), DESC (8), YouthCare, Teen Hope. They also listed friend's houses and squats as options. Seven youth said nowhere. Fifteen youth said they did not know. These cases were individually reviewed and it was found that these youth had answered the previous question and had used a wide variety of services. All but 4 were over 18. The 4 who were under 18 were in fact less knowledgeable about available services and had been on the street 3 months or less.

What Shelters Have You Used?

University District Church Shelter	36
Denny Place	15
Teen Hope	8
YouthCare	8
Other: DESC, Compass, YMCA, Salvation Army, SHARE, YAIT, UDYC,	6
None	39

Table 15

It should be emphasized that 39 youth left this question blank or answered "none." Of those who said "none" it was because they would not use shelters for several reasons. There were 9 youth under age 18 who said "none" and these stated they did not know for sure where to go. There was no significant relationship found between length of time on the street and use of shelters. Although the responses are often not clear, this finding does support the need to maintain outreach services and to do effective advertisements for shelter and housing resources.

Youth were asked: "Why don't you use the available shelters?" The responses included:

Reasons for not using shelters

of Responses in Category

Eligibility Restrictions: age, pregnancy, pet, criminal charges, parental contact	25
Program Rules: rules, structure, curfew, wake-up time, drug/alcohol use, religious rules	24
Conditions: overcrowded	20
Don't feel safe	13
Separation from friends & family	10
Unsanitary Conditions	9
Staff treatment	7
Shelter located too far away	4
Don't like it	1

Table 16

Youth were asked what they liked about shelters. Their responses are listed below.

What Was Liked About Shelters

of Responses in Category

	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
Safe, stable, dry, warm place to stay	47
Food	17
Caring Staff, help	13
Showers	7
Friends, activities, laundry	6
Nothing	10

Table 17

Youth were asked what they did not like about shelters. The responses were, predictably, similar to the reasons given for not using shelters.

What don't you like about shelters # of Responses in Categories

Titlet dell t jed ille decat ellettere	" or responded in satisficing
Program Rules: Structure, wake up time, curfew, drug/alcohol/smoking restrictions, religion, no sex, no cell phones	49
Staff Treatment	12
Overcrowded: no privacy, gay/racial tensions, separated from friends	35
Unsanitary Conditions	10
Eligibility Restrictions	9
Safety: violence, theft, drug use, disease	6

Table 18

The qualitative responses to the question: "Why don't you use the available shelters?" are included in Appendix A. It is important to keep in mind that the majority of the sample was over age 18 and more youth had issues with the overall quality of shelters than with the rules and structure of shelters. The total number of youth who responded to this question was 75.

When would you use a shelter

As a last resort: pregnancy, safety	38
Weather: cold, raining	23
Basic needs: sleep, food, shower	13
All the time	12
If sick	12
Never	8

Table 19

Youth were asked to describe changes they would make that might lead them to using shelters more often. The responses are listed below.

What would encourage you to use shelters more

More flexible rules: allow pets, co-ed, easier access, more independence	66
Improve conditions: cleaner, better food, showers, blankets, bus tokens, provide money	28
Staff: should be respectful, caring, youth friendly, open minded	18
Safer	9
Change eligibility: wider age range	10
Don't know	13

Table 20

Youth were also asked if their last shelter experience had helped them. Sixty-six youth did not respond, 25 said shelter had provided a warm dry place, 9 referred to the staff, showers, and housing resources as helpful; 6 referred to food, and 3 referred to safety. Youth were asked why the last shelter experience did not help. Fifty-three youth did not respond to this question. Sixteen youth stated they felt unsafe, there were thefts, and harassment; 11 referred to the rules being problematic; 8 stated that service had not helped them improve their situation; 8 reported poor treatment by staff; and 6 reported not feeling comfortable, too dependent.

Transitional Living Services Twenty-eight percent of the sample reported they had used Transitional Living Services. When asked where they could go for TLP services, 59 youth said they did not know. Twenty-five youth listed the following services: YouthCare, Labateyah, Friends of youth.

Youth were asked how they obtained spending money. The chart below lists their responses:

How do you get

Spending money	Responses
Spare changing	32
Job	27
Other	19
Sell drugs	12
Friends	14
Theft	9
Sex acts	4

Table 21

Twenty youth (19%) stated they had had sex for money or a place to stay. Twelve youth, 11.4%, stated they needed to get drugs every day.

One of the tasks of this evaluation was to ascertain any special characteristics or attributes of the subpopulations of youth that might inform our recommendations. As described earlier, an additional 8 youth aged 17 or less were surveyed in February. We asked several additional questions of this group that are described below.

What is the most important reason for not using services?

- Too far from school, unfamiliar areas
- Run you through programs all day long, too many hoops, getting a good case worker
- No reason
- Hoping to get back together with mom
- Feel I am too independent
- Doesn't want to live a secret life (domestic violence shelter)
- I would have to sign over my baby
- Don't feel like I need them.

What are the most important reasons you have for not using shelters

- Distance from school
- Rules
- Better places that are more comfortable
- Not being able to sleep enough
- Have to wake up to early and no breakfast
- Just don't care for them, not good places

Youth under age 18 did not have reasons for not using shelter that were particularly distinct from the older age group.

Youth were asked about the Becca Bill because of the significant legal impact it could have on their options. Half of the youth had heard of Becca, but did not feel they had been affected by it. These youth had the bill explained to them. Youth were asked: "Would using shelters cause something to happen that you don't want to have happen?' Three of the eight youth answered "yes". Their reasons are listed below.

Have you ever heard of the Becca Bill

NO (4) Yes (4)

If yes has the Becca Bill affected you in any way.

- No, but was explained to them at Denny shelter
- No Explained at school
- No was explained in school about truancy
- No Truancy explain to them, thought could be sent to jail

Would using shelters cause something to happen that you don't want to have happen?

Yes (3) No (5)

- Fear would get sick from others, rape
- Health reasons
- Possible

Discussion Only 23% of the youth who participated in the survey were under 18 while the population served by programs administering the survey is 40%. This is noteworthy for several reasons. First, 40% of the population served by street outreach and drop in centers that participated in administering the survey are reportedly under age 18. Second, the service dynamics of this subgroup require further exploration. The younger age group of street youth may be more afraid of giving information about themselves. We may have failed to access these youth who are most fearful of engaging in services. Conversely, the younger population of runaway and homeless youth may be more successfully engaged by services and swiftly moved out of these street oriented services. Those who are not, may be more deeply committed to street life subcultures addiction and involvement in prostitution.

Providers also said in the provider survey that they think DSHS is placing more youth. It could be that younger youth show up in the outreach statistics, but receive brief services and are referred on to shelters or DSHS or are encouraged to go home. In other words, characteristics of the youth served by outreach including age, may not reflect the makeup of committed street kids. The population, which is involved with the outreach program for a longer period of time, is more likely to have

developed relationships that allow them to comfortably participate in a survey. This population may indeed be closer to 23% minors than the total population that comes into contact with outreach at all.

This is the first time we have really heard that some portion of youth don't know about services or where to go for shelter. This could also mean that there are no shelter resources for which the youth is eligible. The fact that some shelters operate

at 5 different sites on different nights may be a source of confusion as well for young adults who are new to the streets or new to Seattle. Clearly it is a reason to enhance shelter program outreach and information and referral resources.

If we added the number of youth who get involved in selling drugs for a place to stay we might find that sexual predators and drug dealers are sheltering a larger portion of this population than the shelter system.

A few key things that youth told us in the survey:

- They don't always know about services
- Some youth feel unsafe in shelters
- Youth perspectives on what is appealing or not about shelters as reflected in the survey support focus group and anecdotal information

These responses indicate that there is a need to:

- Enhance shelter program outreach, information, referral, and transportation resources.
- Provide a continuum of shelter services ranging from very low barrier programs to 24-hour structured and licensed programs. An increased sense of health and safety may be an incentive for engagement into more structured programs.
- Develop a triage system through better collaboration between shelters
- Review shelter characteristics youth say are attractive in terms of how they might be implemented in some parts of the system in a way that provides incentives for engagement.

Survey data provided information on how youth get money, involvement in survival sex, and need for drugs. It is interesting to note that almost as many youth have jobs as those who spare change for money. While the number of youth who exchange sex for money is low (4), the number who said they had exchanged sex for a place to stay is quite high (20). This is a statement on the informal shelter system. We might also look at this survival sex number compared to the number who sometimes uses shelter (36).

Summary of Service Provider Interviews

Interviews were conducted with nearly all providers of shelter and transitional housing for homeless youth in King County. Ten youth shelter programs, eleven transitional living/transitional housing programs and eight transitional housing for young parent programs were included. Two transitional housing and one teen parent program did not participate.

Interviews contained questions concerning the utilization of each program's beds and ideas about improving utilization. Interviews were conducted with the manager of each program. The following results are provided separately for each of the three types of program.

Shelters

Program managers were asked about the average utilization over the past year and what they considered the expected maximum utilization to be for their programs. Actual utilization rates varied considerably among shelters. The ranges are included as well as averages for the licensed shelters. It should be noted that different programs reported lowest and highest rates during each time period.

Percent full:	Oct 00-March 01	April 01-Sept 01	Most recent		
Licensed	Avg. 44%/Range 27-60%	Avg. 40%/Range 14-67%	Avg. 43%/Range 19-76%		
Unlicensed Over 18	Not available	not available	97%		
Unlicensed Under 18	17%	8%	8%		

Table 22

Why less than 100%

Eight of the ten shelter programs expect less than 100% utilization. Respondents were asked why they expect lower utilization rates and what are the major reasons that beds go empty. The following reasons were given

- Youth appeal issues: youth have trouble with the structure, hours, location or program elements (4)
- Lack of referrals (4)
- Transition time between residents and holding beds for youth who have run (2)
- Milieu issues
- Staffing limitations
- Inability to serve youth with severe mental health issues

Most common age

All but one program said the youth they served were most likely to fall into the oldest age group eligible for their program.

Responses to whether trends are toward older or younger youth:

- Increase (5)
- Decrease (2) one because a group of younger youth have all arrived together from another part of the city over the past month, the other was referring to an increase in state referrals of younger youth into state beds in their shelter program.
- No recent change (2)

Where the younger youth are, if not in shelter

- In state care (6)
- More are staying home (5)
- They are staying on the street, in squats or with friends (5)
- Becca law reporting requirements are a reason that youth are not coming to shelters (3)

Reasons for empty beds/barriers

Providers gave a variety of reasons that beds are not filled including structural, funding and design issues; staffing issues; youth issues; and seasonal trends.

- Program structure (7):
 - program hours are limited by licensing guidelines;
 - staffing and space;
 - long, in-depth intake processes pose a barrier;
 - productive time requirement is challenging for street youth; and
 - general high level of structure in the program is a barrier to street youth, but works effectively with youth who come directly from state care.
- Marketing issues, lack of outreach and public relations activities, low visibility (5)
- Programs said that varied philosophies among staff is hard for youth to manage
 (4)
- Three cited lack of staff diversity as a barrier (3)
- Less likely to be full during the summer and on holidays (3)
- Beds designated for youth fitting specific criteria causes them to turn youth away
 (2)
- Faith based programming reduces utilization by youth who are not interested (1)
- Two programs said it is challenging to work with volunteers (2)
- Two talked about difficulty with staff boundary issues (2)
- Programs need more/better trained staff in order to keep youth in programs longer and avoid blowouts, especially among higher needs youth
- Milieu issues
- Increased substance abuse issues and mental health issues

Work with youth of color, LGBTQ youth

Most programs said they have a philosophy that supports efforts to provide quality services to youth of color and LGBTQ youth.

- Staff diversity is a strength in their program (5)
- Provided training for all staff related to these issues (4)
- One was just awarded grant specifically for anti-racism training
- Have developed programming specific to the needs of youth of color and/or LGBTQ youth (3)
- Good community connections are a strength in working with these youth (2)

Weaknesses/Improvements needed in work with youth of color, LGBTQ youth

Most programs say they especially need more staff of color and have less difficulty serving LGBTQ youth than youth of color. The notable exception is that some programs are having difficulties with where transgender youth sleep.

- Need more staff diversity to effectively serve diverse youth (5)
- Need more training (5)
- Difficulties with sleeping arrangements for transgender youth -licensing regulations pose a problem in this area (2)
- Youth biases is an issue
- Funding to meet the specific needs is required

Program strengths

- Diverse staff (5)
- Use of volunteers (4)
- Consistency provided by long term staff was mentioned as a strength (3)
- Younger staff as and advantage (2)
- Older staff (2)

Program design strengths

- Positive activities (7)
- Availability of supportive services (5)
- Youth involvement in program design (3)
- Consistency
- Home like atmosphere
- High level of independence allowed
- Faith based programming

What conditions contribute to keeping beds full

- A good number of state referrals (4)
- Program changes having a positive effect on keeping beds full including new leadership in the program, increased age limits and changed philosophy (3)
- More full before the Becca law required reporting within 8 hours of entry

What changes could increase utilization of Shelter programs

• Change the Becca reporting requirements (7)

- Making running away illegal
- More stable funding
- Changing funding requirements to allow an older age range
- Fixing the HOPE programs referral system
- Simplified intake processes
- Fewer beds designated for youth who fit narrow criteria
- Increased outreach/visibility
- Increased hours of service
- More staff
- A review of rules and program philosophy.

Referrals

Shelter program managers were asked about their experience in making referrals to other shelter and housing programs.

- The reputation of their program and the relationship between program staff affects referral decisions (7)
- Do not make referrals to longer term housing, but use outside case management to make longer-term housing referrals (3)
- Shelters play a key role in helping youth become prepared for longer-term programs (2)
- Case management waiting lists are problematic
- Most programs are not designed for street youth, but are better suited to youth leaving state care without significant time on streets

Additional information they could use in making more successful referrals

- More updated resource information (6)
- Better communication between programs (2)
 - There are opportunities for communication through various task forces, etc, but the large number of groups all with similar names gets overwhelming and confusing
- Visual referral information for youth to access (2)
- Better understanding of hope referral process
- More info on adult system

Services needed/Enhancements needed

- Drug/alcohol services should be available at shelters (6)
- More bridges between services, better-coordinated services and better coordination among funders (5)
- Mental health services need to be available at shelters (4)
- Three talked about more independent/semi-independent housing models are needed (3)
- More drop-in hours including the weekends (3)

Over twenty additional service types or models of service were suggested by one or two respondents. A complete list is included in Appendix B.

Youth suggestions

Shelter providers were asked to respond to recommendations made by youth in the focus groups conducted in summer of 2001.

Pets

All but one program supports this idea in some form—maybe not at their program.

- May need changes in licensing or health department regulations
- Need to have resources to provide quality care for animals
- Limit animals to kennels outside of shelter
- Find alternatives such as overnight pet foster care, volunteer vets caring for animals, etc
- Concerned about health and safety issues—youth and staff with allergies, vaccinations, fights between animals, etc.
- Shouldn't encourage youth to have pets because they almost always die because
 of lack of proper care -look at other ways to help youth meet needs to be nurturing

<u>Unmarried couples</u>

- Already allow couples but limit physical contact within program (4)
- Don't have ability to supervise all spaces at all times, creating too great a risk for inappropriate physical contact (4)
- Need to screen for committed, healthy relationships to avoid supporting exploitation or violence within relationships (2)

More flexibility to come and go during program hours

- All feel it would be unreasonable to try to accommodate all schedules
- Most currently allow for passes or make exceptions for work schedules once youth have demonstrated responsibility
- No programs would support just allowing youth in and out 24 hrs.
- One program mentioned that this could only work with a program who's age range was small

Later wake up at shelter

- All but one program supports this idea
- The only barriers are shelter spaces that are used for other purposes in the morning, and not enough staff to keep the program open longer
- The one program that wouldn't consider this said wake up times are determined by school schedules

Shelter serving youth over and less than 18:

- Three programs do this currently or are planning to
- Most other programs would not want to try this because of liability issues and therapeutic concerns about housing minors with adults
- Two programs were very strongly opposed to this idea, but might support if the age range were small (for example, 16-20, not 13-20)

 Some said that licensing guidelines make it hard to do this, since minors have to be separated from adults for sleeping, so programs would need extra space and extra staff to monitor space

What works best

Finally, shelter providers were asked what they felt works especially well in their program or other shelter programs.

- Staff who are good at building relationships with youth (5)
- Lots of activities on and off site as working well (3)
- A good balance between structure and flexibility/respect (2)
- Support services on site (2)
- A high level of independence (2)
- Home like environment
- Willingness to adapt program to current needs
- Collaboration with other providers

Housing

Transitional Living/Housing and Young Parent Housing programs were also interviewed. The focus of this report is on emergency shelter, however transitional housing is an integral part of the continuum of services. All parts of the continuum affect the others, so a brief report on transitional housing interviews is provided here. Only responses to questions which may be especially relevant to the charge of the task force or which provide context for responses from shelter providers are included.

In 2000 when the original "It Takes More than Shelter" survey was completed, transitional housing programs were experiencing significant under utilization. From the chart below it appears that utilization rates for transitional housing are now very close to the maximum expected rate.

Percent full:	Oct 00-March 01	April 01-Sept 01	Most recent	Expected
Transitional h	ousing 78%	78%	90%	82%
Teen parent	82%	91%	82%	91%
Table 23				

Why less than 100%

When asked why their programs are less than 100% full on average all programs said transition time is the issue. When admitting a youth to a long-term residential program the intake process is necessarily long. Youth must be interviewed, visit the program, and meet other residents before the program staff and the incoming youth can decide if the placement is likely to be successful. The lack of shelter for older youth exacerbates this situation because youth on the street or in transient living situations may be difficult to contact when their turn comes up on the waiting list.

What could be changed so programs would be more full

Changes in law

- Becca bill reporting requirements (2)
- Six month limit on voluntary placements (2)
- The need to go through a court procedure to be placed in transitional housing (2)
- Changes are needed to allow mixing minor parents with youth adult parents
- Changes are needed in welfare system so youth can participate in employment programs like SYEP and hold internships without losing their cash grant
- Programs need an exemption from landlord-tenant laws so youth could be evicted when necessary without taking so much staff time

Changes in funding guidelines

- Less stringent intakes, simplified referrals between HOPE, RLSP, etc. Would reduce barriers to getting youth into programs (4)
- HUD guidelines need to be changed to broaden the definition of homeless to include youth who are involved with DSHS, but not dependent or not receiving housing services through the state (4)
- Section 8 vouchers should be allocated to teen parent programs or youth should be allowed to get on the waiting list before turning 18 so they might have access when they age out of the program (2)
- Difficulties in working out implementation of the HOPE Act programs has been a barrier
- Programs need to be allowed to serve felons based on their own screening procedures
- They need to be able to serve pregnant and parenting youth
- Complex eligibility guidelines required by funders are difficult for potential referral agencies to understand
- More long-term funding is needed so programs don't have to apply every three years

Other

- There is a great need for a young adult shelter program similar to old YAIT model to help prepare youth for transitional housing (2)
- More money for higher staffing ratios and higher quality staff
- More programs specifically designed for the most mentally ill and chemically dependent youth
- A mental health counselor available on site at transitional housing programs
- A more lenient system of structure should be available for some youth
- More program outreach and public relations activities are needed as well

Referrals

- More updated resource information is needed (6)
- More information about the youth who are referred by the state
- Faster criminal history checks for youth moving into programs is needed

Summary/Discussion

◆ Legal requirements pose barriers to shelter utilization

There are clear differences between licensed and unlicensed shelters. Some of these differences affect utilization directly. Unlicensed shelters do not report runaways and do not require youth to be engaged in services in order to sleep in the shelter. Providers stated Becca reporting was one of the two biggest barriers to serving street youth.

◆ There is an increase in older youth using programs.

Staff from half of the shelters survey stated they were seeing an increase in the age of youth using their programs. The reasons cited for the decrease in the younger population seen in services included:

- 1. more youth are in state care
- 2. more are staying home
- 3. more are staying in squats and with friends

Providers recognized that unlicensed shelters that are not obligated to do runaway or Becca Bill reporting and do not have to obtain consent for placements tend to have higher rates of utilization and also see youth in the younger age groups. This trend would support the second observation of shelter staff who report seeing an increase in older youth using programs. The legal reporting requirements for licensed shelters was mentioned by most programs as the most critical factor affecting utilization of their programs.

◆ Drug/Alcohol and Mental Health Support Services Needed

Providers also stated that the availability of drug/alcohol and mental health services to support shelter staff and services would allow more youth to be admitted into shelters.

Improved coordination between providers.

Better-coordinated service between providers was the third most often mentioned change that would improve shelter utilization. Less stringent intakes, simplified referrals between HOPE and RLSP, and fewer beds designated for youth who fit narrow criteria were mentioned by both shelter and housing providers as a way to reduce barriers to getting youth into programs.

♦ Modifications can be implemented.

Providers were positive about making changes youth have requested if resource and regulatory barriers can be overcome. Providers had a number of ideas on how to accommodate pets so that youth could use shelters without giving up their animals. Unmarried couples could be accommodated in some types of young adult programs if physical contact can be limited or methods for assessing the health of relationships could be employed. Later wake up times could generally be accommodated in overnight shelters if staff resources and space were available. Finally, age ranges spanning over and under 18 are already accommodated in several programs. Others

have concerns about space requirements to shelter both age groups and keeping the age range fairly narrow. One program said that all these ideas raise the question of whether it is more important to do whatever it takes to get youth in the door to start building relationships or to maintain higher expectations/standards and teach valuable life lessons.

Analysis of Local Continuum of Services/Contrast With Other Places

A wide variety of services exist to help homeless and runaway youth stay safe and healthy and transition back home or into stable housing while continuing to address developmental tasks of adolescence and young adulthood. At least 35 Agencies in King County operate one or more programs designed to meet the needs of homeless or runaway youth. The gaps analysis on page 10 reflects the current estimated need, system capacity and additional services needed.

There are advantages to having so many agencies involved in serving homeless youth. A range of options exists for youth. This can be beneficial in providing differing treatment philosophies, programming styles and staffing, which address the different needs among a diverse youth population. It also allows more youth to access at least some services in their own community or in the neighborhood of their choice. Finally, it provides a safety net for youth who have a conflict with one agency or staff person, or who are excluded from a program. They have second and sometimes multiple chances to comfortably try again to make services work for themselves. At the system level it provides a substantial community of people directly concerned with homeless youth. This community has the potential for developing significant power in advocating for increased resources for homeless youth, increasing the efficacy of the current service system, and for educating the public about issues related to youth homelessness.

The downside of such a large group of service providers is complexity in coordinating services. The system in general is somewhat fragmented and constantly changing. Simple communication of changes in services between providers for referral purposes is cumbersome. True integration of services across 35 organizations would be very difficult and potentially unfeasible.

Status of the Continuum of Care

While a fairly complete continuum of services exists in King County, those services are loosely coordinated and numerous gaps exist. Many crucial services have eligibility criteria, limited days and hours of service, or other conditions, that are confusing and make it difficult to navigate service system. The County covers a very large geographic area with many rural, suburban, and urban sub-areas. None of these areas except the University District, and the Downtown of core in Seattle have a full range of services accessible without transportation to another area. Public

transportation is not convenient to all services. Some services are available for some youth and not for others based on age or some other status. Some services are available most days and hours through coordination between different agencies offering similar services, but are not available every day or time at any one location.

Appendix C contains a map showing the locations of homeless youth services. Several mini-continuums exist within specific Agencies and neighborhoods. These each provides a full range of services including street outreach, daytime multi-service centers with a range of support services, emergency shelter and transitional housing.

YouthCare

YouthCare is Seattle's oldest and largest agency serving homeless youth. Services to runaway and homeless youth are their core mission and they currently provide the greatest number and range of programs in Seattle for this population. Through the Orion Center program, street outreach, case management, education, employment, recreation, healthcare, meals, other support services and drop in activities are provided. A group living model emergency shelter provides short-term shelter, assessment and referral. Several transitional housing programs are operated by YouthCare to assist youth in learning independent living skills and transitioning into stable independent housing.

Friends of Youth

For more than 50 years Friends of Youth has developed, provided and advocated for children, youth and their families in east King County. They have 19 eastside locations that provide services to homeless youth, young adults, and young mothers. The Friends of Youth outreach program offers case management, street outreach, transportation, healthcare, food and clothing for homeless teens and assists them in finding long-term housing, employment, education and counseling. Friends of Youth also offers short-term shelter in two home locations and five transitional living programs that prepare youth between the ages of 18-21 for self-sufficiency in a supportive and structured residential program. They recently developed a new overnight shelter for young adults in collaboration with the YMCA that will open in April 2002.

University District Service Providers

More than 10 organizations work together to coordinate a wide variety of services to homeless youth in Seattle's University District. These providers meet regularly to coordinate services and insure the best possible continuum of services and 24 hour, seven day per week coverage with some sort of activity for youth to be engaged in. Three agencies provide street outreach and two others provide daytime drop-in recreation, case management, education and other support services. Two employment programs exist, a health clinic, a hot meal program, three shelter programs in the U-District and one in University village, and several transitional housing programs in or near the neighborhood.

Downtown Seattle

Several organizations operate services in downtown Seattle including two daytime drop-in centers with health care, food, clothing, hygiene, education, employment, case management and counseling available. An overnight shelter and a transitional housing program are operated by two additional organizations. Providers coordinate services to offer services for the maximum hours and days possible.

Service Coordination Mechanisms

At least 35 organizations are currently providing one or more programs for homeless youth. Many of these organizations develop referral agreements and informally work together to avoid duplication and provide maximum coverage of hours and days of service. A number of regular meetings take place to coordinate service, cross-train, and collaborate on advocacy. Among these are:

CHOW (health outreach)

PRO-Youth (County-wide case management program)

Broadway Human Services Roundtable

University District Service Providers

University District Partnership For Youth

Better Practices group (Drop-In managers)

YYA Committee (Local level advocacy)

Homeless Youth Task Force (State level advocacy)

Street Youth Task Force (Executives, funders, policy makers advocacy)

This long list of committees and task forces can be confusing. Many providers don't know which meetings are most important to attend. It may take attendance at two or more meetings to determine the relevance of the group to the work of a particular individual or agency.

Funding and Licensing Complexities

A broad array of funders also participates in the homeless youth system in King County. However many of these funding sources provide only a portion of a shelter operating budget, while placing strict eligibility restrictions on who can be served. A number of shelter and housing programs have beds designated to several different fund sources. In some cases a state or county agency contracts for a specific number of beds to be used only for youth referred by that agency. The reimbursement rates rarely pay the full cost of care however, and contracts are often for too few beds to cost-effectively operate within the available facility. So a facility may have other fund sources supporting the contracted beds and may have beds funded by other means. These contracts also place limits on youth who may be served in the same facility with those in the contracted beds.

An overlay to the eligibility requirements for funding sources is state licensing requirements. By law, all facilities providing care to minors must be licensed by the state. Licensing requirements include safety, health and risk management components for the physical environment as well as program elements such as staff ratios, staff screening, staff credentials, and youth screening.

Shelter /Housing Youth Status/Eligibility Matrix

Status ▼ Bed/contract ▶		Group License						Overnight License	Unlicensed		
	Foster Care	Interim Care	CRC	TLP	Basic Center	McKinney	HOPE		McKinney	TLP?	Private
Age	12-17	12-17	12-17	16-21 < 18 must be separated from >18	12-17	16-21 < 18 must be separated from >18	12-17	12-17 or 16-21 < 18 must be separated from >18	18 and over	18 and over	Sheltering under 18 violates law Inconsistentl y enforced
Dependency/ State involvement	Must be placed by State	Must be placed by State	Must be placed by State (or police if secure CRC)	?	?	Cannot be State Dependent	Must be or become State Dependent Must be placed by state	No rule	NA	NA	No rule
Homelessness	No rule	No rule	No rule	Must come from street or shelter	Must be runaway or homeless	Must come from street or shelter	Must come from street or shelter	No rule	Must come from street or shelter	Must come from street or shelter	No rule
Runaway	NA	NA	NA	Must be reported 8hrs if <18	Must be reported 8hrs	Must be reported 8hrs if <18	NA	Must be reported 8hrs if <18	NA	NA	Must be reported 8hrs if <18
Gender	M & F must be separated	M & F must be separated	M & F must be separated	M & F must be separated	M & F must be separated	M & F must be separated	M & F must be separated	M & F must be separated	?	?	No rule
Consent	Parent or court	Parent or court	Parent or court	Parent or court if <18	Parent or court	Parent or court if <18	Parent or court	Parent or court if <18	No rule	No rule	Parent or court if <18

Table 24

Several types of licenses exist for youth shelter and transitional housing programs with different requirements. Table 24 describes the various requirements for making eligibility decisions. This level of complexity has been identified in all discussions with both shelter providers and those who make referrals to shelters as a major cause of empty beds and a barrier to access for youth.

Current Attempts to improve shelter system

Issues of shelter underutilization and gaps in the shelter system have been evident for some time. A number of large and small efforts have been made to improve the shelter system. In 1996 King County, the City of Seattle, and several providers developed a countywide outreach program to attempt to engage more youth in services and to improve utilization of shelter and transitional housing programs. This program found a miss-match between youth on the street and many of the shelter programs. Many youth were too old or otherwise ineligible for shelter services. Fund source priorities also encouraged the program to serve older youth who were ready to transition into housing reducing the focus on shelter. For these reasons this program had little impact on shelter utilization.

In 1999 the Youth and Young Adult Committee of the Seattle King County Coalition for the Homeless began a process to better understand the shelter utilization issue. Information was gathered and disseminated through forums and surveys to help better educate shelter providers, referral providers and the larger community about youth shelter. Shelters began holding open houses to help educate referral sources about their programs. Shelters and transitional housing programs have reviewed and clarified their program rules and screening procedures to reduce barriers when possible and reduce misunderstandings among youth and referral sources. Finally, new shelter resources for young adults over 18 have been developed in response to the gap in services for this age group.

The efforts of two shelter programs to improve their programs are described in more detail here as an example of strategies programs are taking to respond to information generated through community processes about the shelter needs of youth. Denny Place Youth Shelter has taken many steps over the past two years to improve utilization of their program. The University Youth Shelter has worked to improve the stability and quality of their program and to continue to respond to needs as expressed by youth.

Denny Place Youth Shelter

Denny Place has struggled with extreme underutilization for the past 5 years. Before that time, the shelter was often full. Two factors are considered the main causes for the drop in nightly census. The Becca Bill was passed requiring the shelter to report runaways, and shortly thereafter DSHS stopped making referrals to Denny Place. Since the Becca Bill, police have come to pick up runaway youth at the shelter a number of times. On two occasions, officers entered the lounge area of the shelter

and removed the youth in handcuffs. The shelter staff saw these events as having an extremely negative effect on their reputation among street youth.

Denny Place has tried several strategies to improve the utilization rate including lengthening the maximum stay, relaxing daily referral requirements to reduce a youth identified barrier, outreach to referral sources and when the census is low, relaxing the intake screening criteria somewhat on drug use and mental health issues. None of these strategies has proven effective insignificantly increasing nightly utilization of the shelter however.

The next step was to meet with referral sources and other service providers to get input on a change in the model of service or population served. The decision has been made that the age will be changed to 16-20 starting March 20. Licensing requires that minors sleep in separate rooms from people age 18 and over, so it will not be possible to serve both males and females in the current space. Services will be limited to males. The referral policy will change to a self referral basis with a requirement that youth identify a responsible adult support person within one week and begin meeting regularly with that person within 2 weeks for assistance in planning stable housing and/or other personal goals. Agreements have been made with transitional housing programs that Denny Place will have guaranteed beds for youth on housing waiting lists or needing a time out from housing.

The program is currently staffed to accommodate 6 youth per night. If demand for more beds can be demonstrated, additional staff may be hired.

University Youth Shelter

While University Youth Shelter has not generally suffered from underutilization, it has experienced problems with instability including a closure of several weeks, as well as a negative reputation among some service providers for enabling youth to avoid more structured, service rich programs and potentially contributing to underutilization of other shelters. Therefore it is described here as a key part of the shelter system which is not well understood by many, as a model for shelter that is well used by youth, and as a program that has been through recent efforts to improve shelter services.

The shelter is not licensed by Washington State. It operates on the basis that hospitality and sanctuary should be provided by churches for people in need and that state licensing requirements would interfere with their ability to do that. The University Youth Shelter Program is one of three shelter programs operating in churches in the University District. The three programs coordinate to make shelter available to as broad an age range and as many nights as possible. The University shelter program serves up to 20 youth ages 15 to 21 four nights per week. On the other three days, one program (Street Youth Ministries) operates a shelter for ages 13-17 and another program (University Temple Methodist Church Young Adult Shelter) is working on being open all three days to serve 18-25.

The University Youth Shelter has two goals:

- Provide low barrier/high hospitality overnight shelter to allow as many homeless youth as possible to have a safe place to sleep at night.
- Assist youth in getting off the streets.

The shelter rotates between four churches. A director provides administrative support to the program, is on site at the shelter every evening and on call overnight. One lead volunteer at each church is responsible for overnight supervision every night along with a minimum of 4 volunteers. Entry to the shelter is on a drop-in basis. It opens after the Teen Feed program closes in the evening and youth can enter until 10:30 pm. Evidence of age and ability to maintain safe, non-violent behavior are the only entry requirements. Rules are kept to a minimum just to insure a safe and non-violent atmosphere. Shelters try to provide opportunities for involvement in the program and investment of youth to self enforce rules. Very few problems happen because of the youth investment in the program. In most cases, youth who need to be asked to leave are allowed back in eventually after a break and negotiation of an agreement with the Director.

The program has worked over the past three years to significantly improve the stability of the program and the quality of services. The program provides no transitional services, but coordinates with other providers to ensure safe opportunities for youth to be off the streets 24 hours per day. The Service Links for Youth program operated by University Street Ministries provides case management on site at shelter most nights and the Shelter Director and volunteers make referrals to other programs.

Over the past three years, University Shelter Program has made several efforts to improve the program. The program has incorporated as a non-profit and has hired a full time Director. Volunteer training opportunities have increased. On site case management has improved the likelihood that shelter youth will engage in other services to help get off the street and meet other goals. A youth board is being developed, and youth participation on the Board of Directors is being enhanced. With these changes, the program more closely approaches models of overnight shelter that operate in states with less restrictive licensing and harboring laws.

Alternative Models From Other Places

A search via Internet and word of mouth was conducted for programs in other cities that use models of service that differ substantially from any King County programs. Most areas have similar services to those that exist here. Models which seem to differ from local programs include: 24/7 drop in centers or drop in/shelter combinations, coordinated service continuums, host home programs, and subsidized independent living in individual apartments. Program managers of a sample of each of these types of programs were interviewed concerning the efficacy of the model and to determine potential differences in context, which may impact the model's replication here. A description of each program follows.

24/7 drop in

Only one 24-hour drop in center was found in the time available for searching. We believe that others do exist, however. A number of programs operate a combination of drop-in "free time" and structured daytime activities for 12 hours every day with close coordination with one or more overnight shelter programs. They may also have overnight self- referral access to shelter by telephone. Some allow youth to sleep in drop-in for short periods during the day. Requirements that youth engage in services vary from immediate enrollment in services to 2 weeks, with flexibility for hard to engage youth who need the center for safety. Crosswalk in Spokane, Safe Space NYC, and Larkin Street in San Francisco operate on this combination drop-in/shelter model.

Janus Youth Access and Assessment Center (formerly Greenhouse) in Portland, Oregon is the only real 24-hour drop in we were able to find, however we believe there are others. This program is sited in the same building with a crisis shelter and a longer-term shelter program. The shelters are full every night. Youth who do not get a bed in one of the shelters are allowed to sleep on the floor of the drop in center. The Access and Assessment Center is part of an integrated continuum of services operated by three private non-profit agencies and managed by the county government that provides approximately 60% of the funding for services. The Center provides the screening within 2 hours of a youth's entry into the center, then assessment and referral to one of the two case management agencies within 48 hours. Youth who are under 15 are screened out of the continuum and sent to the runaway shelter, Harry's Mother, for assessment. They may return to the continuum only after the runaway shelter refers them back.

System Reform/Coordinated Service Continuums

A comprehensive search for system reform initiatives was not done, but two were uncovered in the process of looking for different drop in and shelter models: Minnesota State Plan for Runaway and Homeless Youth and Multnomah County Homeless Youth Continuum. Other systems are or have been in existence including Homeless Youth 101 in San Francisco, but have not been researched.

- Minnesota State Plan For Runaway and Homeless Youth was initiated by providers and a planner with the State Department of Human Services. The plan resulted in significant State funding for homeless youth services.
- Multnomah County Homeless Youth Continuum was visited to learn more about this somewhat different approach to homeless youth. In Portland a group of business people, government representatives, and youth service providers came together to design an ideal system of services for homeless youth and then fully implemented it. It required a re-distribution of County funding and willingness on the part of providers who were awarded contracts to collaborate and build the model as designed by the oversight group.

The Homeless Youth Continuum currently includes three private non-profit agencies that closely coordinate services to homeless youth in Downtown

Portland. Services include Street Outreach, a 24 hour Access and Assessment Center, a 25 bed crisis overnight shelter, two agencies which provide case management and other transitional services, a 30 bed shelter program, and three transitional housing options. Portland also has a 24-hour police intake center for runaway and homeless youth that coordinates with the Continuum. Drug/alcohol and mental health services are currently under development through a Robert Woods Johnson grant.

The outstanding relevant features of the system include:

- Runaways are differentiated from homeless youth
- Clearly defined roles for each agency, clear consistent screening, assessment and referral procedures
- Electronic information sharing between agencies
- Two large dormitory-style shelters always full
- Scattered site subsidized/supported housing
- Strong Youth Development philosophy at program and system level
- Top priority of business and government
- Close cooperation with police

Issues: The biggest problem faced by the continuum is that some youth use the drop in center for very long periods without ever engaging in transitional services. New management of the Access and Assessment Center are working to address this issue. There is a population of youth who are contacted by street outreach who do not use continuum services. A survey was done of these youth that found that some are too old –the continuum age limit is 21 – some are drug/alcohol dependent or mentally ill to an extent that they cannot make use of the system and some have had bad experiences with the program. The close relationship with the police may be a deterrent to some youth as well. Providers are hopeful that the new drug/alcohol and mental health services being developed will address some of these issues.

Host Homes

Only one host home program was investigated, although others do exist. The YouthLink Host Home Program in Minneapolis matches LGBT young adults with host homes in the gay community. The program provides screening and training for host home parents and asks for a 1-year commitment. YouthLink feels this program has been successful because of the support of a close-knit gay community. Host home parents have a strong commitment to supporting LGBT young adults.

Permanent Housing

Several permanent housing programs were found. These programs provide housing search assistance, temporary rent subsidies, and supportive case management services to homeless youth in independent apartments or public housing. We are aware of a number of programs in several states, but were only able to talk with one of them, Inside Out in Portland, Oregon. They said a good relationship with landlords, low caseloads and random weekly apartment checks for all youth are key factors in

the success of the program. This program is part of a continuum. Youth generally graduate from their semi-independent program to scattered sites.

Other

Overnight shelter seems to be very common. Many places have overnight shelter that is closely coordinated with daytime programs. There are a variety of levels of structure/independence. The two we chose to speak with were Covenant House Texas and Portland's Porchlight and Streetlight programs.

Covenant House turned out to not be overnight shelter in that 24-hour program is provided and required. It is worth mentioning that all youth must have parent's permission to enter the shelter. Other minors are transported immediately to the state child welfare agency. This is the only example we found of rules more restrictive than our 8 hour Becca reporting.

Portland's Overnight shelter is open to receive youth all night, but is usually full by 11pm. Youth can stay 14 days per month and must participate in a screening before entry and an assessment within 48 hours. No requirement for engagement in services is required beyond that, although case management enrollment is highly encouraged. A 4-month shelter with space to store belongings is available for youth enrolled in case management. Both of these overnight shelter options are always full. Younger youth and those who are runaways are transported to the runaway shelter that employs a group living model.

Analysis

Several advantages to our current system stand out which must be maintained. A range of program options and styles exist allowing choice and fit for youth. A large group of people in Seattle has a vested interest and passion for caring for homeless and runaway youth along with an understanding of the complex issues and circumstances surrounding youth homelessness and provision of services to them. These advantages need to be nurtured and capitalized upon. Along with this large range of programs comes a fairly complete continuum of services to meet various needs of diverse youth. If fragmentation can be reduced and coordination and integration increased, substantial gains may be made in improving youth outcomes and reducing the number of youth who fall through the cracks with minimal investment of new resources.

Outstanding problems in the local service system that directly affect shelter utilization include:

- Confusion on the part of youth and direct service providers about what services are available, who is eligible for available services, hours and locations of operation. Some of these pieces if information are moving targets which are difficult to stay up to date on even for the experienced provider.
- 2. <u>Lack of incentives</u> for youth to engage in long-term services and presence of some disincentives for engagement.

- 3. The existence of many opportunities for youth to avoid engagement in services including both low barrier services without engagement incentives and informal systems of support that are often dangerous or harmful.
- 4. Lack of resources in suburban and rural communities.
- 5. <u>Laws, regulations, and funding patterns</u> that promote confusion in intake and eligibility processes and provide disincentives for youth to engage and for service providers to make referrals.

Through analysis of the local service system, comparison with other services in other places and review of attempts that have been made so far to improve shelter, key points of intervention to address each of these problems can be identified. These include:

- Developing clearer roles for various programs and positions within the system
- More seamless 24/7 coverage of programs to keep kids off the street and greater incentives for engagement within those programs
- Increased tools for enforcement against drug dealers and sexual predators
- More resources for suburban and rural areas
- Addressing barriers created by the Becca law and other regulatory issues These recommendations will be described more thoroughly in the Findings and Recommendations section.

Findings and Recommendations

The purpose of this project was to develop a clear understanding of the issue of youth shelter utilization and to make recommendations for reducing barriers to youth shelter, maximizing effective utilization of shelters, and improving the system of care for homeless youth. Each section of this report has addressed one or more aspects of the shelter utilization issue. The following recommendations, based on all these sources of information, are actions that the Task Force can undertake with confidence that they incorporate the best knowledge available and are most likely to meet the Task Force goal of ensuring safe options for youth shelter and support for leaving the street. A chart of these recommendations with references to data sources used to develop each strategy is included in appendix D.

A preliminary feasibility analysis was performed to identify strategies most likely to be accomplished by the Task Force within the next three years. Five strategies are proposed for immediate Task Force action. These recommendations may be accomplished over two to three years by phasing of the work, building support and commitment from a larger group of people, and taking advantage of opportunities that support Task Force goals as they present themselves. Only strategies which can be accomplished without developing resources to fund a new program or service are recommended here. The Homeless Youth Charette report describes strategies for developing services to fill gaps in the service system.

Several serious barriers will not be addressed without new resources, however. The greatest of these are the lack of accessible mental health and drug/alcohol services and the easy access of sex and drug predators to street youth. These problems are not insurmountable but will require additional resources. Therefore it is further recommended that when implementation of other recommendations is underway, two groups be formed to continue efforts to develop resources in these areas.

These are the strategies recommended by the Steering Committee:

- 1. Clarify youth shelter utilization patterns and reporting mechanisms.
- Develop and broadly disseminate written documents explaining youth shelter utilization issues.
- Develop standards for optimal shelter utilization
- Develop method for tracking and reporting on youth shelter utilization

Some shelters are underutilized and some are not. Changes need to be made in how shelter utilization is defined and reported in order to clarify where and when actual problems exist. Some of the issues that contribute to perceived and actual shelter underutilization can be addressed immediately, some will take longer. Therefore it is recommended that the Task Force work to address some immediate issues in how shelter utilization is defined and tracked while work on larger system

reform is underway. This will provide an immediate way to create a clear picture of how youth shelters are utilized and rational standards for vacancy rates that funders can use to hold shelters accountable.

Standards need to be developed for how utilization rates are determined and what vacancy rates are expected for different types of programs. The analysis in the "What We Already Know" section or perhaps a more detailed analysis needs to be broadly disseminated. Such an analysis could clearly differentiate between low utilization because of low demand, mismatch or programs with the population in need, and issues endemic to service model. Low utilization rates are not a proxy for need. Youth shelters are a crucial service needed to keep vulnerable youth safe from the dangers of the street. The idea that youth shelters are not needed or are a waste of resources must be once and for all put to rest.

We may need to ask programs to report their program utilization in a different way. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy's Secure CRC report recommends alternative models of measuring utilization that take into account the need for regular crisis capacity. This analysis based on the average daily capacity over a month may be useful in educating the public about youth shelter utilization. This method of determining utilization may also allow consideration of unusable beds on a given night as well. It will require some central collection of daily bed counts however. Safe Harbors may be able to respond to this need.

- 2. Change the requirement to exempt emergency shelters from reporting runaways within 8 hours. Shelters protect youth from the dangers of the street and need to have time to engage the youth. Appropriate permission to house youth will continue to be required within 72 hours.
- Develop a coordinated lobbying strategy for the 2003 legislative session to change the law.

Providers attribute the steady drop in utilization of shelters by youth who are under age 18 at least in part to the Becca Reporting requirement. While this law was intended to provide increased protection for youth by keeping parents closely involved, providers feel it has had the opposite effect and discourages the most traumatized youth from using services at all. In fact, providers feel the Becca legislation may encourage youth to turn to street families in squats or to predators for shelter. The alternative view might be that the decreases seen in the younger population in shelters may be attributed to this stricter accountability that discourages many from running in the first place and captures those who do. This explanation does not take into account the needs of the most vulnerable youth – those who are being severely abused at home. Running away may be a healthy response in these situations and shelters need more than 8 hours to engage these youth and gain their confidence before contacting the authorities.

The literature review found ample documentation that the vast majority of homeless youth are victims of abuse and neglect. One large, multi-site study also found that youth reports of abuse are valid and accurate. In the focus groups, youth stated that giving their names and runaway reporting were reasons they don't use shelters. In the youth survey, parental contact was mentioned as a reason for not using shelters. This was not an issue for a large number of respondents, but this may have been due to the older age of the sample overall. In the provider interviews there was agreement on the significance of Becca reporting as a barrier to service. This finding stood out as a major difference in the review of other homeless youth systems. The lack of any such requirement allows low barrier access to shelter in Oregon and California as well as most other states.

Disincentives for engagement could be reduced through Becca changes, changes in the way programs get authority to care for youth, and requirements about how youth must engage with DSHS in order to receive some shelter services.

- 3. Reduce unsuccessful referrals for youth and shelter providers and alleviate confusion about program and bed eligibility.
- Develop a centralized intake system through the Safe Harbors Project that maintains daily updated information on specific openings in shelters and housing programs.
- Allow initial eligibility screening to be done electronically and on site intake to utilize information already provided during screening.

The complex matrix of laws, funding regulations and youth status cause confusion among youth and those making referrals to shelters. It often requires calls to multiple programs in order to find out what beds an individual youth might be eligible to use.

One provider said "Got beds. Got youth. Youth doesn't qualify for the bed that is open today." They went on to explain that the youth's status will often change and again they may or may not be eligible for the bed that is open at that time. The complexity is often contradictory and counter productive with conflicting and overlapping eligibility requirements imposed by varying funding requirements. Shelter providers, referral providers, funders, and youth all complain about this situation and the onerous intake procedures. "Turnaways" are discouraging for youth, providers, and advocates, resulting in decreased attempts to try to access shelter services.

There is still confusion around Becca reporting requirements. Programs don't know who to report to if parents are not an option and don't know what response to expect from DSHS or the Police. Recommendation #1 suggests changing this requirement. In the mean time, work needs to be done to clarify the appropriate procedures on the part of providers, DSHS and the Police.

HOPE and RLSP program eligibility is a continuing problem in King County. Much work has been done to clarify procedures, yet confusion and frustration persists on the part of providers of these programs and those who would like to refer youth to them. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy report on these programs also discusses difficulties in developing intake procedures for HOPE/RLSP as contributing to low utilization of these programs. This valuable resource for youth has been underutilized while we wrangle over the various interpretations of legislative intent.

Portland has seamless funding for their homeless youth system. The county government administers private, federal, city and county resources that provide 40-60% of the funding for all the various services in the system. One set of eligibility and screening criteria exist for each component of the system. The Runaway shelter is separate from the homeless youth system. While comparable funding sources may not be available here, and our system is substantially larger and more complex in other ways, this does provide another context for looking at the impact of funding makeup and regulations on the efficiency and effectiveness of a system.

Clarity needs to be developed around what beds are available for what youth. Homeless, runaway, and foster system youth are often the same person at different points in time. There is no usual and ordinary path between these situations. Youth may transition from one to another in any order and multiple times. Sometimes more than one status applies to a single youth and sometimes there is disagreement between providers and DSHS about a youth's eligibility. Different fund sources, legal processes and "beds" are attached to each status, which serves only the systems and not the youth.

It may not be feasible to substantially change the funding and regulatory environment in the shelter system without substantial new resources. However utilization of the existing system could be greatly enhanced through easier referral, screening and intake processes. A centralized resource and referral system that is updated daily or at least monthly could greatly facilitate successful access of youth to services. Safe Harbors may be the answer to resource and referral issues, but youth providers need to be better engaged in the design of that system to ensure it responds to the needs of the youth services system.

- 4. Integrate services and develop triage capacity and incentives for engagement.
- Develop a plan for creating clear roles for system entry points and graduated structure/incentives within the system to better engage street youth in the most appropriate service for each individual situation.
- Secure involvement from funders, providers, youth and parents into how the system might be restructured.
- Organize to include all programs serving homeless youth and support better integration of unlicensed shelters and informal programs into system.

It is clear in the data from all sources that our system of services is fragmented and could provide more effective and efficient services to a broader range of youth with enhanced communication and integration. This problem involves the entire system of 35 provider agencies, 10 or more funding agencies and hundreds of youth.

Clear roles and procedures for assessment, triage and referral that are used throughout the system could provide greatly enhanced coordination and less confusion on the part of youth and staff. This could be managed on a system wide level or on a sub-system level divided by geographic region or sub-populations of youth. For example, if one or several specific staff positions were designated within the system to have a high level of expertise in eligibility and referral issues for homeless youth programs, and could provide consultation to other providers, it might greatly facilitate the work of the many case managers, outreach workers and service coordinators in high turnover positions, who need to invest unreasonable amounts of time in developing this expertise and staying up to date on the changing environment.

Low barrier drop-in services and overnight shelter are clearly effective means of keeping broad segments of the street population safe at night and for engaging street entrenched youth in services. From our review of service data and our surveys, it appears that more low-barrier overnight shelter is needed for 16 to 22 year old youth. Currently some drop-in centers, street outreach and University District church based shelters are serving this population. However, these shelters turn youth away regularly. In addition, an attractive next step in level of structure/engagement is not clearly available for youth using these entry-level programs. The recent change in service strategy at Denny Place Youth shelter may partially fill this role, although only for males. The success of Denny Place should be assessed before other changes in age or service model are attempted.

Regardless of accessibility and incentives, some youth are not going to engage for a long time or ever. We don't currently have the appropriate resources to help some young people overcome mental health or addiction issues. How do we keep hard-to-engage kids safe and still attract other homeless and runaway youth away from the streets? Most low barrier programs in other places have time limits for engagement in services. Some are flexible with certain hard-to-engage individuals to keep them safe. Portland has three levels of service, each requiring a higher level of engagement and offering higher levels of some basic resources youth want.

More seamless 24/7 coverage and greater incentives for engagement in other services is needed. The literature review describes ways to meet youth's developmental needs and asserts that youth will respond to programs that do this. The youth focus groups and the youth survey results both contain lists of programming attributes that are attractive to youth. The providers interviewed were positive about incorporating many of these suggestions into the system. If these attributes can be built into the system in a way that makes higher levels of engagement the criteria for gaining access to more attractive programs, the overall

system effectiveness in moving kids from the street toward meeting their individual potentials can be enhanced. Existing programs may need to be re-designed and regulations changed in order to achieve this within current resources.

Another objective of the effort to better integrate services should be to develop more clarity and efficiency in existing coordination and advocacy efforts. As described in the System Analysis section, there are at least nine groups that regularly meet around homeless youth issues. Several additional groups meet around homeless issues in general and require youth and youth provider participation. While each of these groups has a distinct purpose, the number of them and the similarity in their names creates an overwhelming task for agencies to determine how best to allocate staff time to these activities.

- 5. Enhance access to services in rural and suburban communities and communities of color.
- Enhance coordination with broad range of social service providers, faith communities, schools, recreation programs, and local governments.
- Develop training and resource materials for supporting couch surfing youth, their families and those who house them.
- Develop public education campaign about youth homelessness, couch surfing and resources for youth.
- Develop a task force to address transportation issues.

Some suburban and rural communities are looking for ways to increase services, but resources for expansion are limited in the present economic climate. The City has received numerous requests from people wishing to create shelter services for youth of color. When new resources become available these under-served areas and populations should be prioritized. In the mean time, continuing efforts to provide education to the general public, elected officials and local government staff on the status of youth in these communities must be emphasized. Efforts among recreation, social and health service providers to collaborate in expanding or enhancing programs to better reach and serve homeless and couch-surfing youth needs to be supported. Education and technical assistance resources should be developed to help faith communities and informal networks better assist youth who are couch surfing or otherwise on the edge of engaging in street life. Enhanced transportation between services that do exist is a way to provide better service access to youth from across the county.

Development of New Subcommittees/Task Forces

1. Mental health and drug/alcohol Subcommittee

Develop a sub-committee to maximize homeless youth access to existing mental health and drug/alcohol resources and to research potential funding sources for new initiatives. Identify representative from county MHCADSD to participate. Clarification of the specific mental health issues providers face is a necessary first step.

The lack of appropriate accessible Substance abuse and Mental health services is a consistent barrier to effectiveness in working with street youth. Further clarity is needed however concerning the specific issues which need to be addressed and what the best solutions for homeless youth may be at different points in the system.

Portland recently received a grant from Robert Woods Johnson to develop homeless youth specific programming in these areas. In King County that fund source was accessed for youth involved in the Juvenile Justice system. It is clear that Juvenile Justice costs create a clear priority for addressing needs in that system. (The costs of homeless youth on other systems cannot be determined with currently existing data.) The homeless youth system could potentially be eligible to apply for the following SAMHSA funding programs if our region does not already have program funded by them. King County Mental Health Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division would need to be involved.

- Targeted Capacity Expansion Program
- Community Action Grant Program
- Community Action Grant Program for Systems Change

2. Sex/Drug Predators enforcement Task Force

Develop a task force to review and make recommendations on law enforcement policy on adolescents involved in survival sex, dealing drugs and prostitution. Include drug enforcement and domestic violence experts from several domains, police and prosecutors.

This issue involves the existence of many opportunities for youth to avoid engagement in services through informal systems of support which are often dangerous or harmful. Youth are deterred from accessing services for any number of reasons and at the same time are enticed into meeting their survival needs by sexual predators, pimps and drug dealers. While all of these activities are illegal for the adult and/or the youth, law enforcement is seldom able or willing to intervene. Prosecution is impossible in nearly all cases because youth are not willing to provide evidence against perpetrators they view as a parent figure or lover in many cases.

Domestic and sexual violence are often a part of the situation and domestic violence advocates have experience in developing a complete change in law enforcement approach to domestic violence situations with the same issue: victims who are unable or unwilling to press charges against the perpetrator.

Clarification is needed concerning the barriers to enforcement against the heroine and methamphetamine industries in Seattle which prey on homeless youth. Youth often become addicted to these very dangerous drugs through their need for shelter and care, not because of a desire for recreational use. Death from overdoses and other drug related issues have become commonplace among Seattle's homeless youth in recent years. Providers and law enforcement may be discouraged from seeking more effective interventions for a variety of reasons. The time has come to revisit this issue and attempt to develop creative new solutions.

Timeline

A preliminary feasibility analysis was performed to identify strategies most likely to be accomplished by the Task Force within the next three years. The following table proposes a timeline for implementation of the recommendations.

		Summary	and	Timeline
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Near Term Objectives		
Objective:	Activities/Methods	Projected Completion
Clarify current shelter utilization patterns	Develop and disseminate written materials among providers, funders, elected officials, public.	August 2002
Develop optimal shelter utilization standards	Reach agreement among providers and funders	September 2002
Track youth shelter utilization	Develop system for tracking youth shelter utilization with quarterly reports	October 2002

Mid Term Objectives:

Objective:	Activities/Methods	Projected Completion
Engage stakeholders in plan for improved system integration	Task Force develops community wide planning process	October 2002
Eliminate immediate disincentive to shelter usage: runaway reporting	Seek changes to runaway reporting laws	March 2003
Begin implementation of system integration reforms	Programs begin to implement changes as identified through planning process	July 2003
Implement enhanced information and referral system	Safe Harbors	December 2003

Long Term Objectives:

Objective:	Activities/Methods	Projected Completion
Increase support to underserved populations: rural suburban youth, youth of color	Develop Training and TA for enhanced support outside homeless youth system	2004
Implement ongoing system reform oversight Table25	Methods to be determined during system integration planning	June 2003

Conclusion

The preceding recommendations have the potential to increase the efficacy of youth shelters and improve the entire homeless youth system. These recommendations are based on key findings from the study that identified factors that may impede efficient and effective services intended to protect vulnerable youth and assist homeless youth to achieve their potential as independent adults. The most significant barriers to achieving the goal set by the Street Youth Task Force are listed below:

- Lack of understanding or standards for measuring and reporting of real capacity and functional utilization in shelters
- Complex referral and intake procedures
- Service fragmentation and lack of continuous incentives for engagement throughout the continuum
- Lack of accessible services to rural and suburban areas, and to communities of color.
- The existence of disincentives for engagement and unhealthy alternatives to services

These barriers persist in spite of many years of work by a number of people to improve the service system. Solutions are not simple. A careful strategic planning process along with a high level of commitment on the part of all Task Force members to implementation of these recommendations is needed to finally succeed in creating a more integrated system of services. This is necessary before new services can be developed in a way that ensures fulfillment of the Task Force goal that all youth will have safe options for shelter and support for leaving the street.

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Appendix A

Appendix A Youth Survey Qualitative Responses to:

"Why don't you use the available shelters?"

Knowledge/Access (n=13)

Just found out about them.

Don't know about them

Don't know

Don't know where they are/lice infested/dirty

Few available/because of age

Too far away

Aren't many available/downtown shelters not good

Never felt like it

Don't know about them

Far away

Don't like them

Don't know where they are

Always full

Quality (n=34)

Feel safer in the car/people in shelters are older.

Scared

Not comfortable around kids

Don't feel safe/husband too old/separate husband and wife

Scary people

Afraid of robber/has a dog

People, atmosphere, hustlers

They are creepy

Creepy, dirty, nasty

Like the outdoors, don't like sleeping alone

Rules, theft, violence, diseases

Nasty, too many admissions, restrictions, referral process, not clean, too many people

Not a cool place to be, dirty, drug use, smelly, disgusting

Not clean, bugs, violence (DESC)

Not comfortable, people after me, unsafe

Judgmental staff

Illness and drama

Not comfortable sleeping with strangers

Don't want to bring son into environment

Diversity issues, the way shelters are run, the staff

Nasty, boyfriend can't go

Quality

I love myself and my child

They're a hassle, get kicked out, inconvenient location

Nasty, dirty, cold, crack smokers, bad for baby, good one full

None available that allow kids

Not gay friendly

They suck

They suck like the beds

The way they treat people

Dislike treatment by staff/ "shelter babies"

Don't like the people/boyfriend too old

Dumb/oppressive of `my ideologies

Claustrophobic/fear of crowds

Too old/kicked out

Rules/Structure/Access (n=28)

2 Appendix A

Close early

Have to wake up early

Can't bring my dog

Own a dog/and too many chores/don't like religion

Can't drink

Sobriety, lice, older mentally ill people, no pets, no relationships, smoke breaks, rules, curfew.

Age

Felony

Can't bring dog

Don't like rules

Don't want to go to church

Not allowed to sleep next to boyfriend, too much drama, time limit, personality conflicts

Not enough privacy

Long waiting list, eligibility, paperwork

No access to phone, fear of structure

Full

Don't want to leave girlfriend and child

Full, don't trust anyone

Close too early, can't do drop-in and shelter, cant go

Rules/Structure

all days of the weeks, don't like the adults

Too old

Can't be with boyfriend

Has a dog, dogs not allowed

Can't stay with girlfriend

Curfew, wake up early, can't stay with boyfriend

Horrid staff, can't chill with girls, can't use phone, kitchen laws, can't come and go

Want to stay with boyfriend, afraid of theft

Want more lenience

Pregnant

Other Options (n=10)

Haven't needed to

Have a place to stay

I don't use them

Find own place

Likes sleeping outside, doesn't like to sleep with strangers, doesn't like charity

Don't care for them

Too stubborn, try to take care of myself, stay with fiancé

Do fine on my own, don't like being treated like child

More comfy outside, it's not that cold

Stayed home

Been trying

Only temporary

Appendix B

Appendix B

Shelter Service Provider Interviews

<u>Services Needed/Enhancements Needed:</u>

- (6) Drug/alcohol (available at shelters)
- (5) More bridges between services—better-coordinated services—better coordination among funders
- (4) Mental health (available at shelters)
- (3) Independent housing assistance/semi independent model
- (3) More drop-in hours (including weekend)
- (2) Services available at a single site
- (2) Health care
- (2) Group homes for youth over 18 who aren't ready to live independently
- (2) More services outside Seattle

One mention each:

More case management

Transitional housing for under 18

Transportation

Translators

More beds

Less bureaucracy

Lockers

GED prep

Recreation

One-on-one services

Better community connections

Breakfast/lunch programs

Showers in all shelters

Job training not focused on vocational school

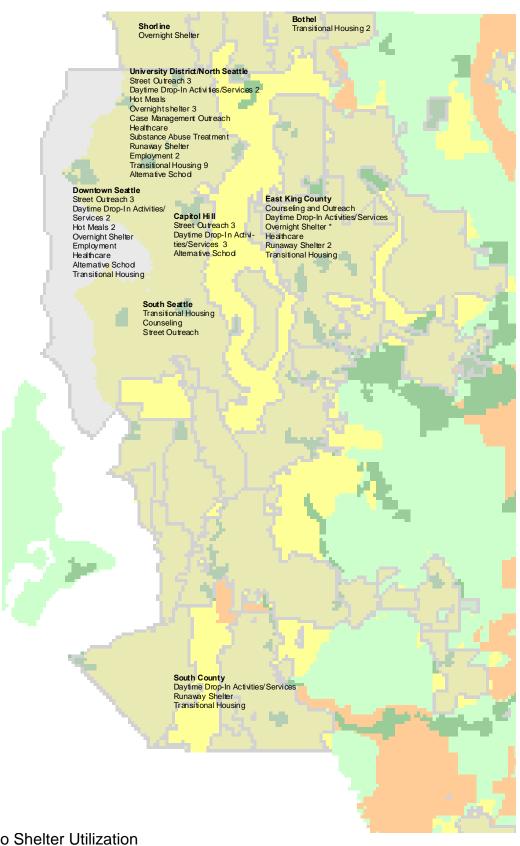
Peer outreach

18-25 shelter

Early intervention to address root causes

Appendix C 1

Homeless Youth Services in King County by Neighborhood or Region



Red	commendation	Service Data	Lit Review	Previous Reports	Youth Focus Groups	Youth survey	Provider Survey	Comparison with Other Places
1.	(Or Dissemination of better analysis) Clarity around functional capacity and utilization rates – everyone who does analysis should use the same methods. Differentiate between low utilization because of low demand/mismatch with population in need and issues endemic to service model.	Variety of results reported on utilization rates – numbers provide an accurate representation of the efficiency of the system. (Better analysis may be provided in this report)	WSIPP CRC report recommends alternative models of measuring utilization which takes into account need for regular crisis capacity. Also much lit on fact that this issue is common across nation	It Takes More than shelter describes variety of complex factors which contribute to empty beds.			Describes variety of complex factors which contribute to empty beds	
2.	Change Becca 8 hour reporting requirement	Providers attribute the steady drop in utilization of shelters by youth at least in part to this.	The vast majority are victims of abuse and neglect. Youth reports are valid.		Youth said getting your name run and runaway reporting was a reason they don't use shelters.	Parental contact was mentioned as a reason for not using shelters, but was not an issue for a large number of respondents.	7/10 providers said this is barrier to service. Mentioned several times during interview.	Lack of requirement allows low barrier access to shelter in Oregon and California as well as most other states
3.	Easier referrals. Clarity and more flexibility on complicated matrix of laws, funding regulations and youth status.	Shelter Data shows list of status categories		Charette Recommendations	Difficulty with transitional housing intake procedures were mentioned.	Youth complained about too many hoops.	Long intake process and beds designated for specific class of youth causes turn aways.	Portland has seamless funding for homeless youth system. Runaway shelter is separate. State laws are lax (may describe actual complexities in chart or table)
За.	Clarify rules/procedures around Becca and Hope	Hope Report discusses difficulties in developing intake procedures for HOPE/RLSP					Providers mentioned this as a problem contributing to underutilization for both the HOPE providers and those making referrals.	In Portland, seamless continuum is possible in part because fewer restrictions on how homeless youth can be served.
4.	Collaboration/Integration of services Identify assessment/triage point(s) for all parts of the system – central or by subregion and/or subpopulation.	Parallel systems	Need for long term supportive relationships cannot often be met with current level of fragmentation. Also need to have sense of control is hard to achieve in	All reports identify this issue as a priority. Charette recommendation- Safe Harbors		Some kids are using an outreach program but don't know about other resources	Providers mentioned better coordination and better resource information as ways to improve utilization Providers agreed that more bridges between services and better coordination is	Some evidence of integration suggested by most folks we talked with. Seattle's system seems more complex and fragmented than any others, may be partly because there are so many services and providers here. Portland is an example of a

			current system.				needed.	fully integrated system.
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4a.	Engagement: Develop incentives for engagement within all barrier free programs.		Youth will respond to activities which address key developmental needs		Provides list of things kids want.		Providers see potential for responding to youth wishes.	Most low barrier programs have time limits for engagement in services. Some are flexible with certain kids to keep them safe. Portland has three levels of service each requiring higher level of engagement and offering basic resources kids want.
5.	Enhance services to under served populations: suburban communities and youth of color.	"Few services are available in areas of the County outside Seattle. Where services have been made available, large numbers of youth have been found." Youth of Color are listed in several places as an under served population. Gaps in services to youth in rural and suburban areas and to youth of color are identified.					Five providers said they need more resources to effectively serve youth of color.	The County covers a large area. None of the areas outside Seattle have a full range of services accessible without transportation to another area. Public transportation is not convenient to all services. Lack of resources in suburban and rural communities is listed as an outstanding system problem affecting shelter utilization.
6.	Mental health and drug/alcohol Subcommittee	Significant unmet needs in Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services		Significant unmet needs in Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services			Significant unmet needs in Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services	Portland just received a RWJ grant to develop population specific mental healht and drug/alcohol services. In King County, the Juvenile Justice system is the focus of this grant.
7.	Sex/Drug Predators enforcement		Mentioned as great risk			Data on survival sex and drug needs demonstrates that for many youth these situations substitute for shelter	Was mentioned as one place that youth go when they are not using shelters.	Not addressed directly, but mention in Portland street survey report and other conversations suggests that it is probably a global problem